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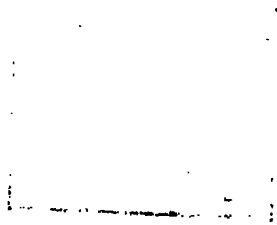

"After Several Days' Travel He Came to a Part of the River Which Filled Him with Astonishment and Admiration."

From a drawing by Henry Sandham.

Holly Edition

The Adventures of Captain Bonneville ✠ ✠ and Wolfert's Roost

By Washington Irving

Illustrated

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The Adventures of Captain Bonneville

Introductory Notice.

WHILE engaged in writing an account of the grand enterprise of ASTORIA, it was my practice to seek all kinds of oral information connected with the supject. Nowhere did I pick up more interesting particulars than at the table of Mr. John Jacob Astor; who, being the patriarch of the Fur Trade in the United States, was accustomed to have at his board various persons of adventurous turn, some of whom had been engaged in his own great undertaking; others, on their own account, had made expeditions to the Rocky Mountains and the waters of the Columbia.

Among these personages, one who peculiarly took my fancy, was Captain BONNEVILLE, of the United States army; who, in a rambling kind of enterprise, had strangely ingrafted the trapper and hunter upon the soldier. As his expeditions and adventures will form the lead-

ing theme of the following pages, a few biographical particulars concerning him may not be unacceptable.

Captain Bonneville is of French parentage. His father was a worthy old emigrant, who came to this country many years since, and took up his abode in New York. He is represented as a man not much calculated for the sordid struggle of a money-making world, but possessed of a happy temperament, a festivity of imagination, and a simplicity of heart, that made him proof against its rubs and trials. He was an excellent scholar; well acquainted with Latin and Greek, and fond of the modern classics. His book was his elysium; once immersed in the pages of Voltaire, Corneille, or Racine, or of his favorite English author, Shakespeare, he forgot the world and all its concerns. Often would he be seen in summer weather, seated under one of the trees on the Battery, or the portico of St. Paul's Church in Broadway, his bald head uncovered, his hat lying by his side, his eyes riveted to the page of his book, and his whole soul so engaged, as to lose all consciousness of the passing throng or the passing hour.

Captain Bonneville, it will be found, inherited some of his father's *bonhomie*, and his excitable imagination; though the latter was some-

what disciplined in early years, by mathematical studies. He was educated at our national Military Academy at West Point, where he acquitted himself very creditably; thence, he entered the army, in which he has ever since continued.

The nature of our military service took him to the frontier, where, for a number of years, he was stationed at various posts in the Far West. Here he was brought into frequent intercourse with Indian traders, mountain trappers, and other pioneers of the wilderness; and became so excited by their tales of wild scenes and wild adventures, and their accounts of vast and magnificent regions as yet unexplored, that an expedition to the Rocky Mountains became the ardent desire of his heart, and an enterprise to explore untrodden tracts, the leading object of his ambition.

By degrees he shaped this vague day-dream into a practical reality. Having made himself acquainted with all the requisites for a trading enterprise beyond the mountains, he determined to undertake it. A leave of absence, and a sanction of his expedition, was obtained from the major-general in chief, on his offering to combine public utility with his private projects, and to collect statistical information for the War Department, concerning the wild countries

and wild tribes he might visit in the course of his journeyings.

Nothing now was wanting to the darling project of the captain, but the ways and means. The expedition would require an outfit of many thousand dollars; a staggering obstacle to a soldier, whose capital is seldom anything more than his sword. Full of that buoyant hope, however, which belongs to the sanguine temperament, he repaired to New York, the great focus of American enterprise, where there are always funds ready for any scheme, however chimerical or romantic. Here he had the good fortune to meet with a gentleman of high respectability and influence, who had been his associate in boyhood, and who cherished a school-fellow friendship for him. He took a general interest in the scheme of the captain; introduced him to commercial men of his acquaintance, and in a little while an association was formed, and the necessary funds were raised to carry the proposed measure into effect. One of the most efficient persons in this association was Mr. Alfred Seton, who, when quite a youth, had accompanied one of the expeditions sent out by Mr. Astor to his commercial establishments on the Columbia, and had distinguished himself by his activity and courage at one of the interior posts. Mr. Seton was

one of the American youths who were at Astoria at the time of its surrender to the British, and who manifested such grief and indignation at seeing the flag of their country hauled down. The hope of seeing that flag once more planted on the shores of the Columbia, may have entered into his motives for engaging in the present enterprise.

Thus backed and provided, Captain Bonneville undertook his expedition into the Far West, and was soon beyond the Rocky Mountains. Year after year elapsed without his return. The term of his leave of absence expired, yet no report was made of him at headquarters at Washington. He was considered virtually dead or lost, and his name was stricken from the army list.

It was in the autumn of 1835, at the country seat of Mr. John Jacob Astor, at Hellgate, that I first met with Captain Bonneville. He was then just returned from a residence of upwards of three years among the mountains, and was on his way to report himself at headquarters, in the hopes of being reinstated in the service. From all that I could learn, his wanderings in the wilderness, though they had gratified his curiosity and his love of adventure, had not much benefited his fortunes. Like Corporal Trim in his campaigns, he had "satisfied the

sentiment," and that was all. In fact, he was too much of the frank, free-hearted soldier, and had inherited too much of his father's temperament, to make a 'scheming trapper, or a thrifty bargainer. There was something in the whole appearance of the captain that prepossessed me in his favor. He was of the middle size, well made and well set; and a military frock of foreign cut, that had seen service, gave him a look of compactness. His countenance was frank, open, and engaging; well browned by the sun, and had something of a French expression. He had a pleasant black eye, a high forehead, and while he kept his hat on, the look of a man in the jocund prime of his days; but the moment his head was uncovered, a bald crown gained him credit for a few more years than he was really entitled to.

Being extremely curious, at the time, about everything connected with the Far West, I addressed numerous questions to him. They drew from him a number of extremely striking details, which were given with mingled modesty and frankness; and in a gentleness of manner, and a soft tone of voice, contrasting singularly with the wild and often startling nature of his themes. It was difficult to conceive the mild, quiet-looking personage

before you, the actual hero of the stirring scenes related.

In the course of three or four months, happening to be at the city of Washington, I again came upon the captain, who was attending the slow adjustment of his affairs with the War Department. I found him quartered with a worthy brother in arms, a major in the army. Here he was writing at a table, covered with maps and papers, in the centre of a large barrack room, fancifully decorated with Indian arms, and trophies, and war dresses, and the skins of various wild animals, and hung round with pictures of Indian games and ceremonies, and scenes of war and hunting. In a word, the captain was beguiling the tediousness of attendance at court, by an attempt at authorship; and was rewriting and extending his travelling notes, and making maps of the regions he had explored. As he sat at the table, in this curious apartment, with his high bald head of somewhat foreign cast, he reminded me of some of those antique pictures of authors that I have seen in old Spanish volumes.

The result of his labors was a mass of manuscript, which he subsequently put at my disposal, to fit it for publication and bring it before the world. I found it full of interesting

details of life among the mountains, and of the singular castes and races, both white men and red men, among whom he had sojourned. It bore, too, throughout, the impress of his character, his *bonhomie*, his kindliness of spirit, and his susceptibility to the grand and beautiful.

That manuscript has formed the staple of the following work. I have occasionally interwoven facts and details, gathered from various sources, especially from the conversations and journals of some of the captain's contemporaries, who were actors in the scenes he describes. I have also given it a tone and coloring drawn from my own observation, during an excursion into the Indian country beyond the bounds of civilization; as I before observed, however, the work is substantially the narrative of the worthy captain, and many of its most graphic passages are but little varied from his own language.

I shall conclude this notice by a dedication which he had made of his manuscript to his hospitable brother in arms, in whose quarters I found him occupied in his literary labors; it is a dedication which, I believe, possesses the qualities, not always found in complimentary documents of the kind, of being sincere, and being merited.

TO

JAMES HARVEY HOOK,

MAJOR U. S. A.

WHOSE JEALOUSY OF ITS HONOR,
WHOSE ANXIETY FOR ITS INTERESTS,
AND
WHOSE SENSIBILITY FOR ITS WANTS,
HAVE ENDEARED HIM TO THE SERVICE AS
The Soldier's Friend;
AND WHOSE GENERAL AMENITY, CONSTANT CHEERFULNESS, DISINTERESTED HOSPITALITY, AND UNWEARIED BENEVOLENCE, ENTITLE HIM TO THE STILL LOFTIER TITLE OF

THE FRIEND OF MAN,

THIS WORK IS INSCRIBED,
ETC.

New York, 1843.

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THE ADVENTURES
OF
CAPTAIN BONNEVILLE.

Chapter 1.

State of the Fur Trade of the Rocky Mountains—American Enterprises—General Ashley and his Associates—Sublette, a Famous Leader—Yearly Rendezvous among the Mountains—Stratagems and Dangers of the Trade—Bands of Trappers—Indian Banditti—Crows and Blackfeet—Mountaineers—Traders of the Far West—Character and Habits of the Trapper.

IN a recent work we have given an account of the grand enterprise of Mr. John Jacob Astor, to establish an American emporium for the fur trade at the mouth of the Columbia, or Oregon River; of the failure of that enterprise through the capture of Astoria by the

British, in 1814; and of the way in which the control of the trade of the Columbia and its dependencies fell into the hands of the Northwest Company. We have stated, likewise, the unfortunate supineness of the American government, in neglecting the application of Mr. Astor for the protection of the American flag, and a small military force, to enable him to reinstate himself in the possession of Astoria at the return of peace; when the post was formally given up by the British government, though still occupied by the Northwest Company. By that supineness the sovereignty of the country has been virtually lost to the United States; and it will cost both governments much trouble and difficulty to settle matters on that just and rightful footing, on which they would readily have been placed, had the proposition of Mr. Astor been attended to. We shall now state a few particulars of subsequent events, so as to lead the reader up to the period of which we are about to treat, and to prepare him for the circumstances of our narrative.

In consequence of the apathy and neglect of the American government, Mr. Astor abandoned all thoughts of regaining Astoria, and made no further attempt to extend his enterprises beyond the Rocky Mountains; and the Northwest Company considered themselves

the lords of the country. They did not long enjoy unmolested the sway which they had somewhat surreptitiously attained. A fierce competition ensued between them and their old rivals, the Hudson's Bay Company ; which was carried on at great cost and sacrifice, and occasionally with the loss of life. It ended in the ruin of most of the partners of the North-west Company ; and the merging of the relics of that establishment, in 1821, in the rival association. From that time, the Hudson's Bay Company enjoyed a monopoly of the Indian trade from the coast of the Pacific to the Rocky Mountains, and for a considerable extent north and south. They removed their emporium from Astoria to Fort Vancouver, a strong post on the left bank of the Columbia River, about sixty miles from its mouth ; whence they furnished their interior posts, and sent forth their brigades of trappers.

The Rocky Mountains formed a vast barrier between them and the United States, and their stern and awful defiles, their rugged valleys, and the great western plains watered by their rivers, remained almost a *terra incognita* to the American trapper. The difficulties experienced in 1808, by Mr. Henry of the Missouri Company, the first American who trapped upon the head-waters of the Columbia ; and the fright-

ful hardships sustained by Wilson P. Hunt, Ramsay Crooks, Robert Stuart, and other intrepid Astorians, in their ill-fated expeditions across the mountains, appeared for a time to check all further enterprise in that direction. The American traders contented themselves with following up the head branches of the Missouri, the Yellowstone, and other rivers and streams on the Atlantic side of the mountains, but forebore to attempt those great snow-crowned sierras.

One of the first to revive these tramontane expeditions was General Ashley, of Missouri, a man whose courage and achievements in the prosecution of his enterprises, have rendered him famous in the Far West. In conjunction with Mr. Henry, already mentioned, he established a post on the banks of the Yellowstone River, in 1822, and in the following year pushed a resolute band of trappers across the mountains to the banks of the Green River or Colorado of the West, often known by the Indian name of the Seeds-ke-dee Agie.* This attempt was followed up and sustained by others, until in 1825 a footing was secured, and a complete system of trapping organized beyond the mountains.

* *I. e.*, the Prairie Hen River. Agie in the Crow language signifies river.

Fort Vancouver, About 1833.

Based on a sketch made during a Government Survey of the Pacific Railroad.

there is regulated by resident partners ; that is to say, partners who reside in the tramontane country, but who move about from place to place, either with Indian tribes, whose traffic they wish to monopolize, or with main bodies of their own men, whom they employ in trading and trapping. In the meantime, they detach bands, or "brigades" as they are termed, of trappers in various directions, assigning to each a portion of country as a hunting, or trapping ground. In the months of June or July, when there is an interval between the hunting seasons, a general rendezvous is held, at some designated place in the mountains, where the affairs of the past year are settled by the resident partners, and the plans for the following year arranged.

To this rendezvous repair the various brigades of trappers from their widely separated hunting grounds, bringing in the product of their year's campaign. Hither also repair the Indian tribes accustomed to traffic their peltries with the company. Bands of free trappers resort hither also, to sell the furs they have collected; or to engage their services for the next hunting season.

To this rendezvous the company sends annually a convoy of supplies from its establisment on the Atlantic frontier, under the guidance of

some experienced partner or officer. On the arrival of this convoy, the resident partner at the rendezvous depends, to set all his next year's machinery in motion.

Now as the rival companies keep a vigilant eye upon each other, and are anxions to discover each other's plans and movements, they generally contrive to hold their annual assemblages at no great distance apart. An eager competition exists also between their respective convoys of supplies, which shall first reach its place of rendezvous. For this purpose, they set off with the first appearance of grass on the Atlantic frontier, and push with all diligence for the mountains. The company that can first open its tempting supplies of coffee, tobacco, ammunition, scarlet cloth, blankets, bright shawls, and glittering trinkets, has the greatest chance to get all the peltries and furs of the Indians and free trappers, and to engage their services for the next season. It is able, also, to fit out and despatch its own trappers the soonest, so as to get the start of its competitors, and to have the first dash into the hunting and trapping grounds.

A new species of strategy has sprung out of this hunting and trapping competition. The constant study of the rival bands is to forestall and outwit each other ; to supplant each other

in the good-will and custom of the Indian tribes; to cross each other's plans; to mislead each other as to routes; in a word, next to his own advantage, the study of the Indian trader is the disadvantage of his competitor.

The influx of this wandering trade has had its effects on the habits of the mountain tribes. They have found the trapping of the beaver their most profitable species of hunting; and the traffic with the white man has opened to them sources of luxury of which they previously had no idea. The introduction of fire-arms has rendered them more successful hunters, but at the same time more formidable foes; some of them, incorrigibly savage and warlike in their nature, have found the expeditions of the fur traders grand objects of profitable adventure. To waylay and harass a band of trappers with their pack-horses, when embarrassed in the rugged defiles of the mountains, has become as favorite an exploit with these Indians as the plunder of a caravan to the Arab of the desert. The Crows and Blackfeet, who were such terrors in the path of the early adventurers to Astoria, still continue their predatory habits, but seem to have brought them to greater system. They know the routes and resorts of the trappers; where to waylay them on their journeys; where to find them in the

hunting seasons, and where to hover about them in winter quarters. The life of a trapper, therefore, is a perpetual state militant, and he must sleep with his weapons in his hands.

A new order of trappers and traders, also, has grown out of this system of things. In the old times of the great Northwest Company, when the trade in furs was pursued chiefly about the lakes and rivers, the expeditions were carried on in batteaux and canoes. The *voyageurs* or boatmen were the rank and file in the service of the trader, and even the hardy "men of the north," those great rufflers and game birds, were fain to be paddled from point to point of their migrations.

A totally different class has now sprung up; —the "Mountaineers," the traders and trappers that scale the vast mountain chains, and pursue their hazardous vocations amidst their wild recesses. They move from place to place on horseback. The equestrian exercises, therefore, in which they are engaged, the nature of the countries they traverse, vast plains and mountains, pure and exhilarating in atmospheric qualities, seem to make them physically and mentally a more lively and mercurial race than the fur traders and trappers of former days, the self-vaunting "men of the north." A man who bestrides a horse, must be essen-

tially different from a man who cowers in a canoe. We find them, accordingly, hardy, lithe, vigorous, and active; extravagant in word, in thought, and deed; heedless of hardship; daring of danger; prodigal of the present, and thoughtless of the future.

A difference is to be perceived even between these mountain hunters and those of the lower regions along the waters of the Missouri. The latter, generally French creoles, live comfortably in cabins and log-huts, well sheltered from the inclemencies of the seasons. They are within the reach of frequent supplies from the settlements; their life is comparatively free from danger, and from most of the vicissitudes of the upper wilderness. The consequence is, that they are less hardy, self-dependent, and game-spirited than the mountaineer. If the latter by chance come among them on his way to and from the settlements, he is like a game-cock among the common roosters of the poultry-yard. Accustomed to live in tents, or to bivouac in the open air, he despises the comforts and is impatient of the confinement of the log-house If his meal is not ready in season, he takes his rifle, hies to the forest or prairie, shoots his own game, lights his fire, and cooks his repast. With his horse and his rifle, he is independent of the world, and spurns at all its restraints.

The very superintendents at the lower posts will not put him to mess with the common men, the hirelings of the establishment, but treat him as something superior.

There is, perhaps, no class of men on the face of the earth, says Captain Bonneville, who lead a life of more continued exertion, peril, and excitement, and who are more enamoured of their occupations, than the free trappers of the West. No toil, no danger, no privation can turn the trapper from his pursuit. His passionate excitement at times resembles a mania. In vain may the most vigilant and cruel savages beset his path; in vain may rocks, and precipices, and wintry torrents oppose his progress; but let a single track of beaver meet his eye, and he forgets all dangers and defies all difficulties. At times he may be seen with his traps on his shoulder, buffeting his way across rapid streams, amidst floating blocks of ice: at other times, he is to be found with his traps swung on his back clambering the most rugged mountains, scaling or descending the most frightful precipices, searching, by routes inaccessible to the horse, and never before trodden by white man, for springs and lakes unknown to his comrades, and where he may meet with his favorite game. Such is the mountaineer, the hardy trapper of the West; and such, as

we have slightly sketched it, is the wild, Robin Hood kind of life, with all its strange and motley populace, now existing in full vigor among the Rocky Mountains.

Having thus given the reader some idea of the actual state of the fur trade in the interior of our vast continent, and made him acquainted with the wild chivalry of the mountains, we will no longer delay the introduction of Captain Bonneville and his band into this field of their enterprise, but launch them at once upon the perilous plains of the Far West.

Chapter II.

Departure from Fort Osage—Modes of Transportation—Pack-horses—Wagons—Walker and Cerré; their Characters—Buoyant Feelings on Launching upon the Prairies—Wild Equipments of the Trappers—Their Gambols and Antics—Difference of Character Between the American and French Trappers—Agency of the Kansas—General Clarke—White Plume, the Kansas Chief—Night Scene in Trader's Camp—Colloquy between White Plume and the Captain—Bee Hunters—Their Expeditions—Their Feuds with the Indians—Bargaining Talent of White Plume.

IT was on the first of May, 1832, that Captain Bonneville took his departure from the frontier post of Fort Osage, on the Missouri. He had enlisted a party of one hundred and ten men, most of whom had been in the Indian country, and some of whom were experienced hunters and trappers. Fort Osage, and other places on the borders of the western wilderness, abound with characters of the kind, ready for any expedition.

The ordinary mode of transportation in these great inland expeditions of the fur traders is on mules and pack-horses; but Captain Bonneville substituted wagons. Though he was to travel through a trackless wilderness, yet the greater part of his route would lie across open plains, destitute of forests, and where wheel carriages can pass in every direction. The chief difficulty occurs in passing the deep ravines cut through the prairies by streams and winter torrents. Here it is often necessary to dig a road down the banks, and to make bridges for the wagons.

In transporting his baggage in vehicles of this kind, Captain Bonneville thought he would save the great delay caused every morning by packing the horses, and the labor of unpacking in the evening. Fewer horses also would be required, and less risk incurred of their wandering away, or being frightened or carried off by the Indians. The wagons, also, would be more easily defended, and might form a kind of fortification in case of attack in the open prairies. A train of twenty wagons, drawn by oxen, or by four mules or horses each, and laden with merchandise, ammunition, and provisions, were disposed in two columns in the centre of the party, which was equally divided into a van and a rear-guard. As sub-

leaders or lieutenants in his expedition, Captain Bonneville had made choice of Mr. I. R. Walker and Mr. M. S. Cerré. The former was a native of Tennessee, about six feet high, strong built, dark complexioned, brave in spirit, though mild in manners. He had resided for many years in Missouri, on the frontier; had been among the earliest adventurers to Santa Fé, where he went to trap beaver, and was taken by the Spaniards. Being liberated, he engaged with the Spaniards and Sioux Indians in a war against the Pawnees; then returned to Missouri, and had acted by turns as sheriff, trader, trapper, until he was enlisted as a leader by Captain Bonneville.

Cerré, his other leader, had likewise been in expeditions to Santa Fé, in which he had endured much hardship. He was of the middle size, light complexioned, and though but about twenty-five years of age, was considered an experienced Indian trader. It was a great object with Captain Bonneville to get to the mountains before the summer heats and summer flies should render the travelling across the prairies distressing; and before the annual assemblages of people connected with the fur trade, should have broken up, and dispersed to the hunting grounds.

The two rival associations already mentioned,

the American Fur Company and the Rocky Mountain Fur Company, had their several places of rendezvous for the present year at no great distance apart, in Pierre's Hole, a deep valley in the heart of the mountains, and thither Captain Bonneville intended to shape his course.

It is not easy to do justice to the exulting feelings of the worthy captain, at finding himself at the head of a stout band of hunters, trappers, and woodmen; fairly launched on the broad prairies, with his face to the boundless West. The tamest inhabitant of cities, the veriest spoiled child of civilization, feels his heart dilate and his pulse beat high, on finding himself on horseback in the glorious wilderness; what then must be the excitement of one whose imagination had been stimulated by a residence on the frontier, and to whom the wilderness was a region of romance!

His hardy followers partook of his excitement. Most of them had already experienced the wild freedom of savage life, and looked forward to a renewal of past scenes of adventure and exploit. Their very appearance and equipment exhibited a piebald mixture, half civilized and half savage. Many of them looked more like Indians than white men, in their garbs and accoutrements, and their very

horses were caparisoned in barbaric style, with fantastic trappings. The outset of a band of adventurers in one of these expeditions is always animated and joyous. The welkin rang with their shouts and yelps, after the manner of the savages; and with boisterous jokes and light-hearted laughter. As they passed the straggling hamlets and solitary cabins that fringe the skirts of the frontier, they would startle their inmates by Indian yells and war-whoops, or regale them with grotesque feats of horsemanship, well suited to their half-savage appearance. Most of these abodes were inhabited by men who had themselves been in similar expeditions; they welcomed the travellers, therefore, as brother trappers, treated them with a hunter's hospitality, and cheered them with an honest God speed, at parting.

And here we would remark a great difference, in point of character and quality, between the two classes of trappers, the "American" and "French," as they are called in contradistinction. The latter is meant to designate the French creole of Canada or Louisiana; the former, the trapper of the old American stock, from Kentucky, Tennessee, and others of the Western States. The French trapper is represented as a lighter, softer, more self-indulgent kind of man. He must have his Indian wife,

his lodge, and his petty conveniences. He is gay and thoughtless, takes little heed of landmarks, depends upon his leaders and companions to think for the common weal, and, if left to himself, is easily perplexed and lost.

The American trapper stands by himself, and is peerless for the service of the wilderness. Drop him in the midst of a prairie, or in the heart of the mountains, and he is never at a loss. He notices every landmark ; can retrace his route through the most monotonous plains, or the most perplexed labyrinths of the mountains ; no danger nor difficulty can appall him, and he scorns to complain under any privation. In equipping the two kinds of trappers, the Creole and Canadian are apt to prefer the light fusee ; the American always grasps his rifle ; he despises what he calls the "shot-gun." We give these estimates on the authority of a trader of long experience, and a foreigner by birth. "I consider one American," said he, "equal to three Canadians in point of sagacity, aptness at resources, self-dependence, and fearlessness of spirit. In fact, no one can cope with him as a stark tramper of the wilderness."

Beside the two classes of trappers just mentioned, Captain Bonneville had enlisted several Delaware Indians in his employ, on whose hunting qualifications he placed great reliance.

On the 6th of May the travellers passed the last border habitation, and bade a long farewell to the ease and security of civilization. The buoyant and clamorous spirits with which they had commenced their march, gradually subsided as they entered upon its difficulties. They found the prairies saturated with the heavy cold rains, prevalent in certain seasons of the year in this part of the country, the wagon wheels sank deep in the mire, the horses were often to the fetlock, and both steed and rider were completely jaded by the evening of the 12th, when they reached the Kansas River; a fine stream about three hundred yards wide, entering the Missouri from the south. Though fordable in almost every part at the end of summer and during the autumn, yet it was necessary to construct a raft for the transportation of the wagons and effects. All this was done in the course of the following day, and by evening, the whole party arrived at the agency of the Kansas tribe. This was under the superintendence of General Clarke, brother of the celebrated traveller of the same name, who, with Lewis, made the first expedition down the waters of the Columbia. He was living like a patriarch, surrounded by laborers and interpreters, all snugly housed, and provided with excellent farms. The functionary next in con-

sequence to the agent was the blacksmith, a most important, and, indeed, indispensable personage in a frontier community. The Kansas resemble the Osages in features, dress, and language; they raise corn and hunt the buffalo, ranging the Kansas River, and its tributary streams; at the time of the captain's visit, they were at war with the Pawnees of the Nebraska, or Platte River.

The unusual sight of a train of wagons, caused quite a sensation among these savages; who thronged about the caravan, examining every thing minutely, and asking a thousand questions; exhibiting a degree of excitability, and a lively curiosity, totally opposite to that apathy with which their race is so often reproached.

The personage who most attracted the captain's attention at this place, was "White Plume," the Kansas chief, and they soon became good friends. White Plume (we are pleased with his chivalrous *soubriquet*) inhabited a large stone house, built for him by order of the American government; but the establishment had not been carried out in corresponding style. It might be palace without, but it was wigwam within: so that, between the stateliness of his mansion, and the squalidness of his furniture, the gallant White Plume

An Indian Agency on the Missouri River.

From an Early Drawing.

It prevents his wandering; and his being easily carried off at night by lurking Indians. When a horse that is "foot free," is tied to one thus secured, the latter forms, as it were, a pivot, round which the other runs and curvets, in case of alarm.

The encampment of which we are speaking, presented a striking scene. The various mess-fires were surrounded by picturesque groups, standing, sitting, and reclining; some busied in cooking, others in cleaning their weapons: while the frequent laugh told that the rough joke, or merry story was going on. In the middle of the camp, before the principal lodge, sat the two chieftains, Captain Bonneville and White Plume, in soldier-like communion, the captain delighted with the opportunity of meeting, on social terms, with one of the red warriors of the wilderness, the unsophisticated children of nature. The latter was squatted on his buffalo robe, his strong features and red skin glaring in the broad light of a blazing fire, while he recounted astounding tales of the bloody exploits of his tribe and himself, in their wars with the Pawnees; for there are no soldiers more given to long campaigning stories than Indian "braves."

The feuds of White Plume, however, had not been confined to the red men; he had

much to say of brushes with bee hunters, a class of offenders for whom he seemed to cherish a particular abhorrence. As the species of hunting prosecuted by these worthies is not laid down in any of the ancient books of venerie, and is, in fact, peculiar to our western frontier, a word or two on the subject may not be unacceptable to the reader.

The bee hunter is generally some settler on the verge of the prairie; a long, lank fellow, of fever and ague complexion, acquired from living on new soil, and in a hut built of green logs. In the autumn, when the harvest is over, these frontier settlers form parties of two or three, and prepare for a bee hunt. Having provided themselves with a wagon, and a number of empty casks, they sally off, armed with their rifles, into the wilderness, directing their course east, west, north, or south, without any regard to the ordinance of the American government, which strictly forbids all trespass upon the lands belonging to the Indian tribes.

The belts of woodland that traverse the lower prairies, and border the rivers, are peopled by innumerable swarms of wild bees, which make their hives in hollow trees, and fill them with honey tolled from the rich flowers of the prairies. The bees, according to popular assertion, are migrating, like the settlers, to the west.

An Indian trader, well experienced in the country, informs us that within ten years that he has passed in the Far West, the bee has advanced westward above a hundred miles. It is said on the Missouri, that the wild turkey and the wild bee go up the river together: neither are found in the upper regions. It is but recently that the wild turkey has been killed on the Nebraska, or Platte; and his travelling competitor, the wild bee, appeared there about the same time.

Be all this as it may: the course of our party of bee hunters, is to make a wide circuit through the woody river bottoms, and the patches of forest on the prairies, marking, as they go out, every tree in which they have detected a hive. These marks are generally respected by any other bee hunter that should come upon their track. When they have marked sufficient to fill all their casks, they turn their faces homeward, cut down the trees as they proceed, and having loaded their wagon with honey and wax, return well pleased to the settlements.

Now it so happens that the Indians relish wild honey as highly as do the white men, and are the more delighted with this natural luxury from its having, in many instances, but recently made its appearance in their lands. The consequence is, numberless disputes and

conflicts between them and the bee hunters: and often a party of the latter, returning, laden with rich spoil, from one of their forays, are apt to be waylaid by the native lords of the soil; their honey to be seized, their harness cut to pieces, and themselves left to find their way home the best way they can, happy to escape with no greater personal harm than a sound rib-roasting.

Such were the marauders of whose offenses the gallant White Plume made the most bitter complaint. They were chiefly the settlers of the western part of Missouri, who are the most famous bee hunters on the frontier, and whose favorite hunting ground lies within the lands of the Kansas tribe. According to the account of White Plume, however, matters were pretty fairly balanced between him and the offenders; he having as often treated them to a taste of the bitter, as they had robbed him of the sweets.

It is but justice to this gallant chief to say, that he gave proofs of having acquired some of the lights of civilization from his proximity to the whites, as was evinced in his knowledge of driving a bargain. He required hard cash in return for some corn with which he supplied the worthy captain, and left the latter at a loss which most to admire, his native chivalry as a brave, or his acquired adroitness as a trader.

Chapter III.

Wide Prairies—Vegetable Productions—Tabular Hills—Slabs of Sandstone—Nebraska or Platte River—Scanty Fare—Buffalo Skulls—Wagons Turned into Boats—Herds of Buffalo—Cliffs Resembling Castles—The Chimney—Scott's Bluffs—Story Connected with them—The Bighorn or Ahsahta—Its Nature and Habits—Difference between that and the "Woolly Sheep," or Goat of the Mountains.

FROM the middle to the end of May, Captain Bonneville pursued a western course over vast, undulating plains, destitute of tree or shrub, rendered miry by occasional rain, and cut up by deep water-courses, where they had to dig roads for their wagons down the soft crumbling banks, and to throw bridges across the streams. The weather had attained the summer heat; the thermometer standing about fifty-seven degrees in the morning, early, but rising to about ninety degrees at noon. The incessant breezes, however, which sweep these vast plains, render the heats endurable. Game

was scanty, and they had to eke out their scanty fare with wild roots and vegetables, such as the Indian potato, the wild onion, and the prairie tomato, and they met with quantities of "red root," from which the hunters make a very palatable beverage. The only human being that crossed their path was a Kansas warrior, returning from some solitary expedition of bravado or revenge, bearing a Pawnee scalp as a trophy.

The country gradually rose as they proceeded westward, and their route took them over high ridges, commanding wide and beautiful prospects. The vast plain was studded on the west with innumerable hills of conical shape, such as are seen north of the Arkansas River. These hills have their summits apparently cut off about the same elevation, so as to leave flat surfaces at top. It is conjectured by some, that the whole country may originally have been of the altitude of these tabular hills; but through some process of nature may have sunk to its present level; these insulated eminences being protected by broad foundations of solid rock.

Captain Bonneville mentions another geological phenomenon north of Red River, where the surface of the earth, in considerable tracts of country, is covered with broad slabs of sand-

stone, having the form and position of grave-stones, and looking as if they had been forced up by some subterranean agitation. "The resemblance," says he, "which these very remarkable spots have in many places to old church-yards is curious in the extreme. One might almost fancy himself among the tombs of the pre-Adamites."

On the 2d of June, they arrived on the main stream of the Nebraska or Platte River; twenty-five miles below the head of the Great Island. The low banks of this river give it an appearance of great width. Captain Bonneville measured it in one place, and found it twenty-two hundred yards from bank to bank. Its depth was from three to six feet, the bottom full of quicksands. The Nebraska is studded with islands covered with that species of poplar called the cotton-wood tree. Keeping up along the course of this river for several days, they were obliged, from the scarcity of game, to put themselves upon short allowance, and, occasionally, to kill a steer. They bore their daily labors and privations, however, with great good humor, taking their tone, in all probability, from the buoyant spirit of their leader. "If the weather was inclement," says the captain, "we watched the clouds, and hoped for a sight of the blue sky and the merry sun. If food

was scanty, we regaled ourselves with the hope of soon falling in with herds of buffalo, and having nothing to do but slay and eat." We doubt whether the genial captain is not describing the cheeriness of his own breast, which gave a cheery aspect to everything around him.

There certainly were evidences, however, that the country was not always equally destitute of game. At one place, they observed a field decorated with buffalo skulls, arranged in circles, curves, and other mathematical figures, as if for some mystic rite or ceremony. They were almost innumerable, and seemed to have been a vast hecatomb offered up in thanksgiving to the Great Spirit for some signal success in the chase.

On the 11th of June, they came to the fork of the Nebraska, where it divides itself into two equal and beautiful streams. One of these branches rises in the west-southwest, near the head-waters of the Arkansas. Up the course of this branch, as Captain Bonneville was well aware, lay the route to the Camanche and Kioway Indians, and to the northern Mexican settlements; of the other branch he knew nothing. Its sources might lie among wild and inaccessible cliffs, and tumble and foam down rugged defiles and over craggy precipices; but its direction was in the true course, and up this

stream he determined to prosecute his route to the Rocky Mountains. Finding it impossible, from quicksands and other dangerous impediments, to cross the river in this neighborhood, he kept up along the south fork for two days, merely seeking a safe fording place. At length he encamped, caused the bodies of the wagons to be dislodged from the wheels, covered with buffalo hides, and besmeared with a compound of tallow and ashes, thus forming rude boats. In these, they ferried their effects across the stream, which was six hundred yards wide, with a swift and strong current. Three men were in each boat, to manage it; others waded across, pushing the barks before them. Thus all crossed in safety. A march of nine miles took them over high rolling prairies to the north fork; their eyes being regaled with the welcome sight of herds of buffalo at a distance, some careering the plain, others grazing and reposing in the natural meadows.

Skirting along the north fork for a day or two, excessively annoyed by musquitoes and buffalo gnats, they reached, on the evening of the 17th, a small but beautiful grove, from which issued the confused notes of singing birds, the first they had heard since crossing the boundary of Missouri. After so many days of weary travelling, through a naked, monoto-

nous, and silent country, it was delightful once more to hear the song of the bird, and to behold the verdure of the grove. It was a beautiful sunset, and a sight of the glowing rays, mantling the tree-tops and rustling branches, gladdened every heart. They pitched their camp in the grove, kindled their fires, partook merrily of their rude fare, resigned themselves to the sweetest sleep they had enjoyed since their outset upon the prairies.

The country now became rugged and broken. High bluffs advanced upon the river, and forced the travellers occasionally to leave its banks and wind their course into the interior. In one of the wild and solitary passes, they were startled by the trail of four or five pedestrians, whom they supposed to be spies from some predatory camp of either Arickara or Crow Indians. This obliged them to redouble their vigilance at night, and to keep especial watch upon their horses. In these rugged and elevated regions they began to see the black-tailed deer, a species larger than the ordinary kind, and chiefly found in rocky and mountainous countries. They had reached also a great buffalo range; Captain Bonneville ascended a high bluff, commanding an extensive view of the surrounding plains. As far as his eye could reach, the country seemed absolutely

blackened by innumerable herds. No language, he says, could convey an adequate idea of the vast living mass thus presented to his eye. He remarked that the bulls and cows generally congregated in separate herds.

Opposite to the camp at this place was a singular phenomenon, which is among the curiosities of the country. It is called the Chimney. The lower part is a conical mound, rising out of the naked plain ; from the summit shoots up a shaft or column, about one hundred and twenty feet in height, from which it derives its name. The height of the whole, according to Captain Bonneville, is a hundred and seventy-five yards. It is composed of indurated clay, with alternate layers of red and white sandstone, and may be seen at the distance of upwards of thirty miles.

On the 21st, they encamped amidst high and beetling cliffs of indurated clay and sandstone, bearing the semblance of towers, castles, churches, and fortified cities. At a distance, it was scarcely possible to persuade one's self that the works of art were not mingled with these fantastic freaks of nature. They have received the name of Scott's Bluffs, from a melancholy circumstance. A number of years since, a party were descending the upper part of the river in canoes, when their frail barks were

Black Tail Bucks.

From a photograph by A. S. Bennett.

of which they were in quest, but concealed their faithless desertion of Scott; alleging that he had died of disease.

On the ensuing summer, these very individuals visiting these parts in company with others, came suddenly upon the bleached bones and grinning skull of a human skeleton, which, by certain signs, they recognized for the remains of Scott. This was sixty long miles from the place where they had abandoned him; and it appeared that the wretched man had crawled that immense distance before death put an end to his miseries. The wild and picturesque bluffs in the neighborhood of his lonely grave have ever since bore his name.

Amidst this wild and striking scenery, Captain Bonneville, for the first time, beheld flocks of the ahsahta or bighorn, an animal which frequents these cliffs in great numbers. They accord with the nature of such scenery, and add much to its romantic effect; bounding like goats from crag to crag, often trooping along the lofty shelves of the mountains, under the guidance of some venerable patriarch, with horns twisted lower than his muzzle, and sometimes peering over the edge of a precipice, so high that they appear scarce bigger than crows; indeed, it seems a pleasure to them to seek the

most rugged and frightful situations, doubtless from a feeling of security.

This animal is commonly called the mountain sheep, and is often confounded with another animal, the "woolly sheep," found more to the northward, about the country of the Flatheads. The latter likewise inhabits cliffs in summer, but descends into the valleys in the winter. It has white wool, like a sheep, mingled with a thin growth of long hair; but it has short legs, a deep belly, and a beard like a goat. Its horns are about five inches long, slightly curved backwards, black as jet, and beautifully polished. Its hoofs are of the same color. This animal is by no means so active as the bighorn; it does not bound much, but sits a good deal upon its haunches. It is not so plentiful either; rarely more than two or three are seen at a time. Its wool alone gives a resemblance to the sheep; it is more properly of the goat genus. The flesh is said to have a musty flavor; some have thought the fleece might be valuable, as it is said to be as fine as that of the goat of Cashmere, but it is not to be procured in sufficient quantities.

The ahsahta, argali, or bighorn, on the contrary, has short hair like a deer, and resembles it in shape, but has the head and horns of a sheep, and its flesh is said to be a delicious

mutton. The Indians consider it more sweet and delicate than any other kind of venison. It abounds in the Rocky Mountains, from the fiftieth degree of north latitude, quite down to California; generally in the highest regions capable of vegetation; sometimes it ventures into the valleys, but on the least alarm, regains its favorite cliffs and precipices, where it is perilous, if not impossible for the hunter to follow.*

* Dimensions of a male of this species, from the nose to the base of the tail, five feet; length of the tail, four inches; girth of the body, four feet; height, three feet eight inches; the horn, three feet six inches long; one foot three inches in circumference at base.

Chapter IV.

An Alarm—Crow Indians—Their Appearance—Mode of Approach—Their Vengeful Errand—Their Curiosity—Hostility between the Crows and Blackfeet—Loving Conduct of the Crows—Laramie's Fork—First Navigation of the Nebraska—Great Elevation of the Country—Rarity of the Atmosphere—Its Effect on the Wood-work of Wagons—Black Hills—Their Wild and Broken Scenery—Indian Dogs—Crow Trophies—Sterile and Dreary Country—Banks of the Sweet Water—Buffalo Hunting—Adventure of Tom Cain, the Irish Cook.

WHEN on the march, Captain Bonneville always sent some of his best hunters in the advance to reconnoitre the country, as well as to look out for game. On the 24th of May, as the caravan was slowly journeying up the banks of the Nebraska, the hunters came galloping back, waving their caps, and giving the alarm cry, Indians! Indians!

The captain immediately ordered a halt: the

curiosity, they carried back to their chief intelligence of all that they had seen. He had, in consequence, diverged from his pursuit of vengeance to behold the wonders described to him. "Now that we have met you," said he to Captain Bonneville, "and have seen these marvels with our own eyes, our hearts are glad." In fact, nothing could exceed the curiosity evinced by these people as to the objects before them. Wagons had never been seen by them before, and they examined them with the greatest minuteness; but the calf was the peculiar object of their admiration. They watched it with intense interest as it licked the hands accustomed to feed it, and were struck with the mild expression of its countenance and its perfect docility.

After much sage consultation, they at length determined that it must be the "great medicine" of the white party, an appellation given by the Indians to anything of supernatural and mysterious power, that is guarded as a talisman. They were completely thrown out in their conjecture, however, by an offer of the white men to exchange the calf for a horse; their estimation of the great medicine sank in an instant, and they declined the bargain.

At the request of the Crow chieftain the two parties encamped together, and passed the resi-

due of the day in company. The captain was well pleased with every opportunity to gain a knowledge of the "unsophisticated sons of nature," who had so long been objects of his poetic speculations; and indeed this wild, horse-stealing tribe is one of the most notorious of the mountains. The chief, of course, had his scalps to show and his battles to recount. The Blackfoot is the hereditary enemy of the Crow, towards whom hostility is like a cherished principle of religion; for every tribe, besides its casual antagonists, has some enduring foe with whom there can be no permanent reconciliation. The Crows and Blackfeet, upon the whole, are enemies worthy of each other, being rogues and ruffians of the first water. As their predatory excursions extend over the same regions, they often come in contact with each other, and these casual conflicts serve to keep their wits awake and their passions alive.

The present party of Crows, however, evinced nothing of the invidious character for which they are renowned. During the day and night that they were encamped in company with the travellers, their conduct was friendly in the extreme. They were, in fact, quite irksome in their attentions, and had a caressing manner at times quite importunate. It was not

until after separation on the following morning, that the captain and his men ascertained the secret of all this loving-kindness. In the course of their fraternal caresses, the Crows had contrived to empty the pockets of their white brothers; to abstract the very buttons from their coats, and, above all, to make free with their hunting knives.

By equal altitudes of the sun, taken at this last encampment, Captain Bonneville ascertained his latitude to be 41° 47′ north. The thermometer, at six o'clock in the morning, stood at fifty-nine degrees; at two o'clock P. M., at ninety-two degrees; and at six o'clock in the evening, at seventy degrees.

The Black Hills, or Mountains, now began to be seen at a distance, printing the horizon with their rugged and broken outlines, and threatening to oppose a difficult barrier in the way of the travellers.

On the 26th of May, the travellers encamped at Laramie's Fork, a clear and beautiful stream, rising in the west-southwest, maintaining an average width of twenty yards, and winding through broad meadows abounding in currants and gooseberries, and adorned with groves and clumps of trees.

By an observation of Jupiter's satellites, with a Dolland reflecting telescope, Captain

Bonneville ascertained the longitude to be 102° 57′ west of Greenwich.

We will here step ahead of our narrative to observe, that about three years after the time of which we are treating, Mr. Robert Campbell, formerly of the Rocky Mountain Fur Company, descended the Platte from this fork, in skin canoes, thus proving, what had always been discredited, that the river was navigable. About the same time, he built a fort or trading post at Laramie's Fork, which he named Fort William, after his friend and partner, Mr. William Sublette. Since that time, the Platte has become a highway for the fur traders.

For some days past, Captain Bonneville had been made sensible of the great elevation of country into which he was gradually ascending, by the effect of the dryness and rarefaction of the atmosphere upon his wagons. The wood-work shrunk; the paint boxes of the wheels were continually working out, and it was necessary to support the spokes by stout props to prevent their falling asunder. The travellers were now entering one of those great steppes of the Far West, where the prevalent aridity of the atmosphere renders the country unfit for cultivation. In these regions there is a fresh sweet growth of grass in the spring, but it is scanty and short, and parches up in the

course of the summer, so that there is none for the hunters to set fire to in the autumn. It is a common observation, that "above the forks of the Platte the grass does not burn." All attempts at agriculture and gardening in the neighborhood of Fort William have been attended with very little success. The grain and vegetables raised there have been scanty in quantity and poor in quality. The great elevation of these plains, and the dryness of the atmosphere, will tend to retain these immense regions in a state of pristine wildness.

In the course of a day or two more, the travellers entered that wild and broken tract of the Crow country called the Black Hills, and here their journey became toilsome in the extreme. Rugged steeps and deep ravines incessantly obstructed their progress, so that a great part of the day was spent in the painful toil of digging through banks, filling up ravines, forcing the wagons up the most forbidding ascents, or swinging them with ropes down the face of dangerous precipices. The shoes of their horses were worn out, and their feet injured by the rugged and stony roads. The travellers were annoyed also by frequent but brief storms, which would come hurrying over the hills, or through the mountain defiles, rage with great fury for a short time, and then

pass off, leaving everything calm and serene again.

For several nights the camp had been infested by vagabond Indian dogs, prowling about in quest of food. They were about the size of a large pointer; with ears short and erect, and a long bushy tail—altogether, they bore a striking resemblance to a wolf. These skulking visitors would keep about the purlieus of the camp until daylight; when, on the first stir of life among the sleepers, they would scamper off until they reached some rising ground, where they would take their seats, and keep a sharp and hungry watch upon every movement. The moment the travellers were fairly on the march, and the camp was abandoned, these starveling hangers-on would hasten to the deserted fires to seize upon the half-picked bones, the offals and garbage that lay about; and, having made a hasty meal, with many a snap and snarl and growl, would follow leisurely on the trail of the caravan. Many attempts were made to coax or catch them, but in vain. Their quick and suspicious eyes caught the slightest sinister movement, and they turned and scampered off. At length one was taken. He was terribly alarmed, and crouched and trembled as if expecting instant death. Soothed, however, by caresses, he be-

gan after a time to gather confidence and wag his tail, and at length was brought to follow close at the heels of his captors, still, however, darting around furtive and suspicious glances, and evincing a disposition to scamper off upon the least alarm.

On the first of July the band of Crow warriors again crossed their path. They came in vaunting and vain-glorious style; displaying five Cheyenne scalps, the trophies of their vengeance. They were now bound homewards, to appease the manes of their comrade by these proofs that his death had been revenged, and intended to have scalp-dances and other triumphant rejoicings. Captain Bonneville and his men, however, were by no means disposed to renew their confiding intimacy with these crafty savages, and above all, took care to avoid their pilfering caresses. They remarked one precaution of the Crows with respect to their horses; to protect their hoofs from the sharp and jagged rocks among which they had to pass, they had covered them with shoes of buffalo hide.

The route of the travellers lay generally along the course of the Nebraska or Platte, but occasionally, where steep promontories advanced to the margin of the stream, they were obliged to make inland circuits. One of these

took them through a bold and stern country, bordered by a range of low mountains, running east and west. Everything around bore traces of some fearful convulsion of nature in times long past. Hitherto the various strata of rock had exhibited a gentle elevation towards the southwest, but here everything appeared to have been subverted, and thrown out of place. In many places there were heavy beds of white sandstone resting upon red. Immense strata of rocks jutted up into crags and cliffs; and sometimes formed perpendicular walls and overhanging precipices. An air of sterility prevailed over these savage wastes. The valleys were destitute of herbage, and scantily clothed with a stunted species of wormwood, generally known among traders and trappers by the name of sage. From an elevated point of their march through this region, the travellers caught a beautiful view of the Powder River Mountains away to the north, stretching along the very verge of the horizon, and seeming, from the snow with, which they were mantled, to be a chain of small white clouds, connecting sky and earth.

Though the thermometer at midday ranged from eighty to ninety, and even sometimes rose to niney-three degrees, yet occasional spots of snow were to be seen on the tops of the low

mountains, among which the travellers were journeying; proofs of the great elevation of the whole region.

The Nebraska, in its passage through the Black Hills, is confined to a much narrower channel than that through which it flows in the plains below; but it is deeper and clearer, and rushes with a stronger current. The scenery, also, is more varied and beautiful. Sometimes it glides rapidly but smoothly through a picturesque valley, between wooded banks; then, forcing its way into the bosom of rugged mountains, it rushes impetuously through narrow defiles, roaring and foaming down rocks and rapids, until it is again soothed to rest in some peaceful valley.

On the 12th of July, Captain Bonneville abandoned the main stream of the Nebraska, which was continually shouldered by rugged promontories, and making a bend to the south-west, for a couple of days, part of the time over plains of loose sand, encamped on the 14th, on the banks of the Sweet Water, a stream about twenty yards in breadth, and four or five feet deep, flowing between low banks over a sandy soil, and forming one of the forks or upper branches of the Nebraska. Up this stream they now shaped their course for several successive days, tending generally,

to the west. The soil was light and sandy; the country much diversified. Frequently the plains were studded with isolated blocks of rock, sometimes in the shape of a half globe, and from three to four hundred feet high. These singular masses had occasionally a very imposing, and even sublime appearance, rising from the midst of a savage and lonely landscape.

As the travellers continued to advance, they became more and more sensible of the elevation of the country. The hills around were more generally capped with snow. The men complained of cramps and colics, sore lips and mouths, and violent headaches. The woodwork of the wagons also shrank so much, that it was with difficulty the wheels were kept from falling to pieces. The country bordering upon the river was frequently gashed with deep ravines, or traversed by high bluffs, to avoid which, the travellers were obliged to make wide circuits through the plains. In the course of these, they came upon immense herds of buffalo, which kept scouring off in the van, like a retreating army.

Among the motley retainers of the camp was Tom Cain, a raw Irishman, who officiated as cook, whose various blunders and expedients in his novel situation, and in the wild scenes

and wild kind of life into which he had suddenly been thrown, had made him a kind of butt or droll of the camp. Tom, however, began to discover an ambition superior to his station; and the conversation of the hunters, and their stories of their exploits, inspired him with a desire to elevate himself to the dignity of their order. The buffalo in such immense droves presented a tempting opportunity for making his first essay. He rode, in the line of march, all prepared for action: his powder-flask and shot-pouch knowingly slung at the pommel of his saddle, to be at hand; his rifle balanced on his shoulder. While in this plight, a troop of buffalo came trotting by in great alarm. In an instant, Tom sprang from his horse and gave chase on foot. Finding they were leaving him behind, he levelled his rifle and pulled trigger. His shot produced no other effect than to increase the speed of the buffalo, and to frighten his own horse, who took to his heels, and scampered off with all the ammunition. Tom scampered after him, hallooing with might and main, and the wild horse and wild Irishman soon disappeared among the ravines of the prairie. Captain Bonneville, who was at the head of the line, and had seen the transaction at a distance, detached a party in pursuit of Tom. After a long interval they

returned, leading the frightened horse; but though they had scoured the country, and looked out and shouted from every height, they had seen nothing of his rider.

As Captain Bonneville knew Tom's utter awkwardness and inexperience, and the dangers of a bewildered Irishman in the midst of a prairie, he halted and encamped at an early hour, that there might be a regular hunt for him in the morning.

At early dawn on the following day scouts were sent off in every direction, while the main body, after breakfast, proceeded slowly on its course. It was not until the middle of the afternoon that the hunters returned, with honest Tom mounted behind one of them. They had found him in a complete state of perplexity and amazement. His appearance caused shouts of merriment in the camp,—but Tom for once could not join in the mirth raised at his expense: he was completely chapfallen, and apparently cured of the hunting mania for the rest of his life.

Chapter V.

Magnificent Scenery—Wind River Mountains—Treasury of Waters—A Stray Horse—An Indian Trail—Trout Streams—The Great Green River Valley—An Alarm—A Band of Trappers—Fontenelle, his Information—Sufferings of Thirst—Encampment on the Seeds-ke-dee—Strategy of Rival Traders—Fortification of the Camp—The Blackfeet—Banditti of the Mountains—Their Character and Habits.

IT was on the 20th of July that Captain Bonneville first came in sight of the grand region of his hopes and anticipations, the Rocky Mountains. He had been making a bend to the south, to avoid some obstacles along the river, and had attained a high, rocky ridge, when a magnificent prospect burst upon his sight. To the west, rose the Wind River Mountains, with their bleached and snowy summits towering into the clouds. These stretched far to the north-northwest, until they melted away into what appeared to be faint clouds, but which the experienced eyes of the

veteran hunters of the party recognized for the rugged mountains of the Yellowstone ; at the feet of which, extended the wild Crow country, a perilous, though profitable region for the trapper.

To the southwest, the eye ranged over an immense extent of wilderness, with what appeared to be a snowy vapor resting upon its horizon. This, however, was pointed out as another branch of the Great Chippewyan, or Rocky chain ; being the Eutaw Mountains, at whose basis the wandering tribes of hunters of the same name pitch their tents.

We can imagine the enthusiasm of the worthy captain, when he beheld the vast and mountainous scene of his adventurous enterprise thus suddenly unveiled before him. We can imagine with what feelings of awe and admiration he must have contemplated the Wind River Sierra, or bed of mountains ; that great fountain-head, from whose springs, and lakes, and melted snows, some of those mighty rivers take their rise, which wander over hundreds of miles of varied country and clime, and find their way to the opposite waves of the Atlantic and the Pacific.

The Wind River Mountains are, in fact, among the most remarkable of the whole Rocky chain ; and would appear to be among the

loftiest. They form, as it were, a great bed of mountains, about eighty miles in length, and from twenty to thirty in breadth; with rugged peaks, covered with eternal snows, and deep, narrow valleys, full of springs, and brooks, and rock-bound lakes. From this great treasury of waters, issue forth limpid streams, which, augmenting as they descend, become main tributaries of the Missouri on the one side, and the Columbia on the other; and give rise to the Seeds-ke-dee Agie, or Green River, the great Colorado of the West, that empties its current into the Gulf of California.

The Wind River Mountains are notorious in hunters' and trappers' stories: their rugged defiles, and the rough tracts about their neighborhood, having been lurking-places for the predatory hordes of the mountains, and scenes of rough encounter with Crows and Blackfeet. It was to the west of these mountains, in the valley of the Seeds-ke-dee Agie, or Green River, that Captain Bonneville intended to make a halt, for the purpose of giving repose to his people and his horses, after their weary journeying; and of collecting information as to his future course. This Green River Valley and its intermediate neighborhood, as we have already observed, formed the main point of rendezvous, for the present year, of the rival

fur companies, and the motley populace, civilized and savage, connected with them. Several days of rugged travel, however, yet remained for the captain and his men, before they should encamp in this desired resting-place.

On the 21st of July, as they were pursuing their course through one of the meadows of the Sweet Water, they beheld a horse grazing at a little distance. He showed no alarm at their approach, but suffered himself quietly to be taken, evincing a perfect state of tameness. The scouts of the party were instantly on the lookout for the owners of this animal; lest some dangerous band of savages might be lurking in the vicinity. After a narrow search, they discovered the trail of an Indian party, which had evidently passed through that neighborhood but recently. The horse was accordingly taken possession of, as an estray; but a more vigilant watch than usual was kept round the camps at nights, lest his former owners should be upon the prowl.

The travellers had now attained so high an elevation, that on the 23d of July, at daybreak, there was considerable ice in the water-buckets, and the thermometer stood at twenty-two degrees. The rarity of the atmosphere continued to affect the wood-work of the wagons, and

the wheels were incessantly falling to pieces. A remedy was at length devised. The tire of each wheel was taken off; a band of wood was nailed round the exterior of the felloes, the tire was then made red hot, replaced round the wheel, and suddenly cooled with water. By this means, the whole was bound together with great compactness.

The extreme elevation of these great steppes, which range along the feet of the Rocky Mountains, takes away from the seeming height of their peaks, which yield to few in the known world in point of altitude above the level of the sea.

On the 24th, the travellers took final leave of the Sweet Water, and keeping westwardly, over a low and very rocky ridge, one of the most southern spurs of the Wind River Mountains, they encamped, after a march of seven hours and a half, on the banks of a small clear stream, running to the south, in which they caught a number of fine trout.

The sight of these fish was hailed with pleasure, as a sign that they had reached the waters which flow into the Pacific; for it is only on the western streams of the Rocky Mountains that trout are to be taken. The stream on which they had thus encamped, proved, in effect, to be tributary to the Seeds-ke-dee Agie,

or Green River, into which it flowed, at some distance to the south.

Captain Bonneville now considered himself as having fairly passed the crest of the Rocky Mountains; and felt some degree of exultation in being the first individual that had crossed, north of the settled provinces of Mexico, from the waters of the Atlantic to those of the Pacific, with wagons. Mr. William Sublette, the enterprising leader of the Rocky Mountain Fur Company had, two or three years previously, reached the valley of the Wind River, which lies on the northeast of the mountains; but had proceeded with them no farther.

A vast valley now spread itself before the travellers, bounded on one side by the Wind River Mountains, and to the west, by a long range of high hills. This, Captain Bonneville was assured by a veteran hunter in his company, was the great valley of the Seeds-ke-dee; and the same informant would fain have persuaded him, that a small stream, three feet deep, which he came to on the 25th, was that river. The captain was convinced, however, that the stream was too insignificant to drain so wide a valley and the adjacent mountains: he encamped, therefore, at an early hour, on its borders, that he might take the whole of the next day to reach the main river; which he

presumed to flow between him and the distant range of western hills.

On the 26th of July, he commenced his march at an early hour, making directly across the valley, towards the hills in the west; proceeding at as brisk a rate as the jaded condition of his horses would permit. About eleven o'clock in the morning, a great cloud of dust was descried in the rear, advancing directly on the trail of the party. The alarm was given; they all came to a halt, and held a council of war. Some conjectured that the band of Indians, whose trail they had discovered in the neighborhood of the stray horse, had been lying in wait for them, in some secret fastness of the mountains; and were about to attack them on the open plain, where they would have no shelter. Preparations were immediately made for defense; and a scouting party sent off to reconnoitre. They soon came galloping back, making signals that all was well. The cloud of dust was made by a band of fifty or sixty mounted trappers, belonging to the American Fur Company, who soon came up, leading their pack-horses. They were headed by Mr. Fontenelle, an experienced leader, or "partisan," as a chief of a party is called, in the technical language of the trappers.

Mr. Fontenelle informed Captain Bonneville,

that he was on his way from the company's trading post on the Yellowstone, to the yearly rendezvous, with reinforcements and supplies for their hunting and trading parties beyond the mountains; and that he expected to meet, by appointment, with a band of free trappers in that very neighborhood. He had fallen upon the trail of Captain Bonneville's party, just after leaving the Nebraska; and, finding that they had frightened off all the game, had been obliged to push on, by forced marches, to avoid famine; both men and horses were, therefore, much travel-worn; but this was no place to halt; the plain before them, he said, was destitute of grass and water, neither of which would be met with short of the Green River, which was yet at a considerable distance. He hoped, he added, as his party were all on horseback, to reach the river, with hard travelling, by nightfall; but he doubted the possibility of Captain Bonneville's arrival there with his wagons before the day following. Having imparted this information, he pushed forward with all speed.

Captain Bonneville followed on as fast as circumstances would permit. The ground was firm and gravelly; but the horses were too much fatigued to move rapidly. After a long and harassing day's march, without pausing

for a noontide meal, they were compelled, at nine o'clock at night, to encamp in an open plain, destitute of water or pasturage. On the following morning, the horses were turned loose at the peep of day ; to slake their thirst, if possible, from the dew collected on the sparse grass, here and there springing up among dry sand-banks. The soil of a great part of this Green River Valley is a whitish clay, into which the rain cannot penetrate, but which dries and cracks with the sun. In some places it produces a salt weed, and grass along the margins of the streams ; but the wilder expanses of it are desolate and barren. It was not until noon that Captain Bonneville reached the banks of the Seeds-ke-dee, or Colorado of the West ; in the meantime, the sufferings of both men and horses had been excessive, and it was with almost frantic eagerness that they hurried to allay their burning thirst in the limpid current of the river.

Fontenelle and his party had not fared much better ; the chief part had managed to reach the river by nightfall, but were nearly knocked up by the exertion : the horses of others sank under them, and they were obliged to pass the night upon the road.

On the following morning, July 27th, Fontenelle moved his camp across the river ; while

Captain Bonneville proceeded some little distance below, where there was a small but fresh meadow, yielding abundant pasturage. Here the poor jaded horses were turned out to graze, and take their rest: the weary journey up the mountains had worn them down in flesh and spirit; but this last march across the thirsty plain had nearly finished them.

The captain had here the first taste of the boasted strategy of the fur trade. During his brief, but social encampment, in company with Fontenelle, that experienced trapper had managed to win over a number of Delaware Indians whom the captain had brought with him, by offering them four hundred dollars each, for the ensuing autumnal hunt. The captain was somewhat astonished when he saw these hunters, on whose services he had calculated securely, suddenly pack up their traps, and go over to the rival camp. That he might, in some measure, however, be even with his competitor, he dispatched two scouts to look out for the band of free trappers who were to meet Fontenelle in this neighborhood, and to endeavor to bring them to his camp.

As it would be necessary to remain some time in this neighborhood, that both men and horses might repose and recruit their strength; and as it was a region full of danger, Captain

Bonneville proceeded to fortify his camp with breastworks of logs and pickets.

These precautions were, at that time, peculiarly necessary, from the bands of Blackfeet Indians which were roving about the neighborhood. These savages are the most dangerous banditti of the mountains, and the inveterate foe of the trappers. They are Ishmaelites of the first order; always with weapon in hand, ready for action. The young braves of the tribe, who are destitute of property, go to war for booty; to gain horses, and acquire the means of setting up a lodge, supporting a family, and entitling themselves to a seat in the public councils. The veteran warriors fight merely for the love of the thing, and the consequence which success gives them among their people.

They are capital horsemen, and are generally well mounted on short, stout horses, similar to the prairie ponies, to be met with at St. Louis. When on a war party, however, they go on foot, to enable them to skulk through the country with greater secrecy; to keep in thickets and ravines, and use more adroit subterfuges and stratagems. Their mode of warfare is entirely by ambush, surprise, and sudden assaults in the night time. If they succeed in causing a panic, they dash forward with a head-

long fury: if the enemy is on the alert, and shows no signs of fear, they become wary and deliberate in their movements.

Some of them are armed in the primitive style, with bows and arrows; the greater part have American fusees, made after the fashion of those of the Hudson's Bay Company. These they procure at the trading post of the American Fur Company, on Marias River, where they traffic their peltries for arms, ammunition, clothing, and trinkets. They are extremely fond of spirituous liquors and tobacco; for which nuisances they are ready to exchange, not merely their guns and horses, but even their wives and daughters. As they are a treacherous race, and have cherished a lurking hostility to the whites ever since one of their tribe was killed by Mr. Lewis, the associate of General Clarke, in his exploring expedition across the Rocky Mountains, the American Fur Company is obliged constantly to keep at that post a garrison of sixty or seventy men.

Under the general name of Blackfeet, are comprehended several tribes: such as the Surcies, the Peagans, the Blood Indians, and the Gros Ventres of the Prairies: who roam about the southern branches of the Yellowstone and Missouri rivers, together with some other tribes further north.

The bands infesting the Wind River Mountains, and the country adjacent, at the time of which we are treating, were Gros Ventres *of the Prairies*, which are not to be confounded with Gros Ventres *of the Missouri*, who keep about the *lower* part of that river, and are friendly to the men.

This hostile band keeps about the headwaters of the Missouri, and numbers about nine hundred fighting men. Once in the course of two or three years they abandon their usual abodes, and make a visit to the Arapahoes of the Arkansas. Their route lies either through the Crow country, and the Black Hills, or through the lands of the Nez Percés, Flatheads, Bannacks, and Shoshonies. As they enjoy their favorite state of hostility with all these tribes, their expeditions are prone to be conducted in the most lawless and predatory style; nor do they hesitate to extend their maraudings to any party of white men they meet with; following their trails; hovering about their camps; waylaying and dogging the caravans of the free traders, and murdering the solitary trapper. The consequences are, frequent and desperate fights between them and the "mountaineers," in the wild defiles and fastnesses of the Rocky Mountains.

The band in question was, at this time, on

their way homeward from one of their customary visits to the Arapahoes; and in the ensuing chapter, we shall treat of some bloody encounters between them and the trappers, which had taken place just before the arrival of Captain Bonneville among the mountains.

Chapter VI.

Sublette and his Band—Robert Cambell—Mr. Wyeth and a Band of "Down-Easters"—Yankee Enterprise—Fitzpatrick—His Adventure with the Blackfeet—A Rendezvous of Mountaineers—The Battle of Pierre's Hole—An Indian Ambuscade—Sublette's Return.

LEAVING Captain Bonneville and his band ensconced within their fortified camp in the Green River Valley, we shall step back and accompany a party of the Rocky Mountain Fur Company in its progress, with supplies from St. Louis, to the annual rendezvous at Pierre's Hole. This party consisted of sixty men, well mounted, and conducting a line of pack-horses. They were commanded by Captain William Sublette, a partner in the company, and one of the most active, intrepid, and renowned leaders in this half-military kind of service. He was accompanied by his associate in business, and tried companion in danger, Mr. Robert Campbell, one of the pioneers of

the trade beyond the mountains, who had commanded trapping parties there in times of the greatest peril.

As these worthy compeers were on their route to the frontier, they fell in with another expedition, likewise on its way to the mountains. This was a party of regular "Down-easters," that is to say, people of New England, who, with the all-penetrating and all-pervading spirit of their race, were now pushing their way into a new field of enterprise, with which they were totally unacquainted. The party had been fitted out, and was maintained and commanded by Mr. Nathaniel J. Wyeth, of Boston.* This gentleman had conceived an idea, that a profitable fishery for salmon might be established on the Columbia River, and connected with the fur trade. He had, accordingly, invested capital in goods, calculated, as he supposed, for the Indian trade, and had enlisted a number of Eastern men in his employ, who had never been in the Far West, nor knew anything of the wilderness. With these, he was bravely steering his way across the continent, undismayed by danger, difficulty, or distance, in the same way that a New England coaster

* In the former editions of this work we have erroneously given this enterprising individual the title of captain.

and his neighbors will coolly launch forth on a voyage to the Black Sea, or a whaling cruise to the Pacific.

With all their national aptitude at expedient and resource, Wyeth and his men felt themselves completely at a loss when they reached the frontier, and found that the wilderness required experience and habitudes of which they were totally deficient. Not one of the party, excepting the leader, had ever seen an Indian or handled a rifle ; they were without guide or interpreter, and totally unacquainted with "wood craft," and the modes of making their way among savage hordes, and subsisting themselves during long marches over wild mountains and barren plains.

In this predicament, Captain Sublette found them, in a manner becalmed, or rather run aground, at the little frontier town of Independence, in Missouri, and kindly took them in tow. The two parties travelled amicably together; the frontier men of Sublette's party gave their Yankee comrades some lessons in hunting, and some insight into the art and mystery of dealing with the Indians, and they all arrived without accident at the upper branches of the Nebraska or Platte River.

In the course of their march, Mr. Fitzpatrick, the partner of the company who was resident

at that time beyond the mountains, came down from the rendezvous at Pierre's Hole to meet them, and hurry them forward. He travelled in company with them until they reached the Sweet Water; then taking a couple of horses, one for the saddle, and the other as a pack-horse, he started off express for Pierre's Hole, to make arrangements against their arrival, that he might commence his hunting campaign before the rival company.

Fitzpatrick was a hardy and experienced mountaineer, and knew all the passes and defiles. As he was pursuing his lonely course up the Green River Valley, he descried several horsemen at a distance, and came to a halt to reconnoitre. He supposed them to be some detachment from the rendezvous, or a party of friendly Indians. They perceived him, and setting up the war-whoop, dashed forward at full speed: he saw at once his mistake and his peril—they were Blackfeet. Springing upon his fleetest horse, and abandoning the other to the enemy, he made for the mountains, and succeeded in escaping up one of the most dangerous defiles. Here he concealed himself until he thought the Indians had gone off, when he returned into the valley. He was again pursued, lost his remaining horse, and only escaped by scrambling up among the

cliffs. For several days he remained lurking among rocks and precipices, and almost famished, having but one remaining charge in his rifle, which he kept for self-defense.

In the meantime, Sublette and Campbell, with their fellow-traveller, Wyeth, had pursued their march unmolested, and arrived in the Green River Valley, totally unconscious that there was any lurking enemy at hand. They had encamped one night on the banks of a small stream, which came down from the Wind River Mountains, when about midnight, a band of Indians burst upon their camp, with horrible yells and whoops, and a discharge of guns and arrows. Happily no other harm was done than wounding one mule, and causing several horses to break loose from their pickets. The camp was instantly in arms; but the Indians retreated with yells of exultation, carrying off several of the horses, under covert of the night.

This was somewhat of a disagreeable foretaste of mountain life to some of Wyeth's band, accustomed only to the regular and peaceful life of New England; nor was it altogether to the taste of Captain Sublette's men, who were chiefly creoles and townsmen from St. Louis. They continued their march the next morning, keeping scouts ahead and upon their flanks,

and arrived without further molestation at Pierre's Hole.

The first inquiry of Captain Sublette, on reaching the rendezvous, was for Fitzpatrick. He had not arrived, nor had any intelligence been received concerning him. Great uneasiness was now entertained, lest he should have fallen into the hands of the Blackfeet, who had made the midnight attack upon the camp. It was a matter of general joy, therefore, when he made his appearance, conducted by two half-breed Iroquois hunters. He had lurked for several days among the mountains, until almost starved ; at length he escaped the vigilance of his enemies in the night, and was so fortunate as to meet the two Iroquois hunters, who, being on horseback, conveyed him without further difficulty to the rendezvous. He arrived there so emaciated that he could scarcely be recognized.

The valley called Pierre's Hole is about thirty miles in length and fifteen in width, bounded to the west and south by low and broken ridges, and overlooked to the east by three lofty mountains, called the three Tetons, which domineer as landmarks over a vast extent of country.

A fine stream, fed by rivulets and mountain springs, pours through the valley towards the

north, dividing it into nearly equal parts. The meadows on its borders are broad and extensive, covered with willow and cotton-wood trees, so closely interlocked and matted together, as to be nearly impassable.

In this valley was congregated the motley populace connected with the fur trade. Here the two rival companies had their encampments, with their retainers of all kinds; traders, trappers, hunters, and half-breeds, assembled from all quarters, awaiting their yearly supplies, and their orders to start off in new directions. Here, also, the savage tribes connected with the trade, the Nez Percés or Chopunnish Indians, and Flatheads, had pitched their lodgings beside the streams, and with their squaws awaited the distribution of goods and finery. There was, moreover, a band of fifteen free trappers, commanded by a gallant leader from Arkansas, named Sinclair, who held their encampment a little apart from the rest. Such was the wild and heterogeneous assemblage, amounting to several hundred men, civilized and savage, distributed in tents and lodges in the several camps.

The arrival of Captain Sublette with supplies put the Rocky Mountain Fur Company in full activity. The wares and merchandise were quickly opened, and as quickly disposed of to

trappers and Indians; the usual excitement and revelry took place, after which, all hands began to disperse to their several destinations.

On the 17th of July, a small brigade of fourteen trappers, led by Milton Sublette, brother of the captain, set out with the intention of proceeding to the southwest. They were accompanied by Sinclair and his fifteen free trappers; Wyeth, also, and his New England band of beaver hunters and salmon fishers, now dwindled down to eleven, took this opportunity to prosecute their cruise in the wilderness, accompanied with such experienced pilots. On the first day, they proceeded about eight miles to the southeast, and encamped for the night, still in the valley of Pierre's Hole. On the following morning, just as they were raising their camp, they observed a long line of people pouring down a defile of the mountains. They at first supposed them to be Fontenelle and his party, whose arrival had been daily expected. Wyeth, however, reconnoitered them with a spy-glass, and soon perceived they were Indians. They were divided into two parties, forming, in the whole, about one hundred and fifty persons, men, women, and children. Some were on horseback, fantastically painted and arrayed, with scarlet blankets fluttering in the wind. The greater part, how-

ever, were on foot. They had perceived the trappers before they were themselves discovered, and came down yelling and whooping into the plain. On nearer approach, they were ascertained to be Blackfeet.

One of the trappers of Sublette's brigade, a half-breed, named Antoine Godin, now mounted his horse, and rode forth as if to hold a conference. He was the son of an Iroquois hunter, who had been cruelly murdered by the Blackfeet at a small stream below the mountains, which still bears his name. In company with Antoine rode forth a Flathead Indian, whose once powerful tribe had been completely broken down in their wars with the Blackfeet. Both of them, therefore, cherished the most vengeful hostility against these marauders of the mountains. The Blackfeet came to a halt. One of the chiefs advanced singly and unarmed, bearing the pipe of peace. This overture was certainly pacific; but Antoine and the Flathead were predisposed to hostility, and pretended to consider it a treacherous movement.

"Is your piece charged?" said Antoine, to his red companion.

"It is."

"Then cock it, and follow me."

They met the Blackfoot chief half-way, who

extended his hand in friendship. Antoine grasped it.

"Fire!" cried he.

The Flathead levelled his piece, and brought the Blackfoot to the ground. Antoine snatched off his scarlet blanket, which was richly ornamented, and galloped off with it as a trophy to the camp, the bullets of the enemy whistling after him. The Indians immediately threw themselves into the edge of a swamp, among willows and cotton-wood trees, interwoven with vines. Here they began to fortify themselves; the women digging a trench, and throwing up a breastwork of logs and branches, deep hid in the bosom of the wood, while the warriors skirmished at the edge to keep the trappers at bay.

The latter took their station in a ravine in front, whence they kept up a scattering fire. As to Wyeth, and his little band of "Down-easters," they were perfectly astounded by this second specimen of life in the wilderness; the men, being especially unused to bush-fighting and the use of the rifle, were at a loss how to proceed. Wyeth, however, acted as a skilful commander. He got all his horses into camp and secured them; then, making a breastwork of his packs of goods, he charged his men to remain in garrison, and not stir out of their fort. For himself, he mingled with

the other leaders, determined to take his share in the conflict.

In the meantime, an express had been sent off to the rendezvous for reinforcements. Captain Sublette, and his associate, Campbell, were at their camp when the express came galloping across the plain, waving his cap, and giving the alarm: "Blackfeet! Blackfeet! a fight in the upper part of the valley!—to arms! to arms!"

The alarm was passed from camp to camp. It was a common cause. Every one turned out with horse and rifle. The Nez Percés and Flatheads joined. As fast as horsemen could arm and mount they galloped off; the valley was soon alive with white men and red men scouring at full speed.

Sublette ordered his men to keep to the camp, being recruits from St. Louis, and unused to Indian warfare. He and his friend Campbell prepared for action. Throwing off their coats, rolling up their sleeves, and arming themselves with pistols and rifles, they mounted their horses and dashed forward among the first. As they rode along, they made their wills in soldier-like style; each stating how his effects should be disposed of in case of his death, and appointing the other his executor.

The Blackfeet warriors had supposed the brigade of Milton Sublette all the foe they had to deal with, and were astonished to behold the whole valley suddenly swarming with horsemen, galloping to the field of action. They withdrew into their fort, which was completely hid from sight in the dark and tangled wood. Most of their women and children had retreated to the mountains. The trappers now sallied forth and approached the swamp, firing into the thickets at random; the Blackfeet had a better sight at their adversaries, who were in the open field, and a half-breed was wounded in the shoulder.

When Captain Sublette arrived, he urged to penetrate the swamp and storm the fort, but all hung back in awe of the dismal horrors of the place, and the danger of attacking such desperadoes in their savage den. The very Indian allies, though accustomed to bush-fighting, regarded it as almost impenetrable, and full of frightful danger. Sublette was not to be turned from his purpose, but offered to lead the way into the swamp. Campbell stepped forward to accompany him. Before entering the perilous wood, Sublette took his brothers aside, and told them that in case he fell, Campbell, who knew his will, was to be his executor. This done, he grasped his rifle and pushed into

the thickets, followed by Campbell. Sinclair, the partisan from Arkansas, was at the edge of the wood with his brother and a few of his men. Excited by the gallant example of the two friends, he pressed forward to share their dangers.

The swamp was produced by the labors of the beaver, which, by damming up a stream, had inundated a portion of the valley. The place was all overgrown with woods and thickets, so closely matted and entangled that it was impossible to see ten paces ahead, and the three associates in peril had to crawl along, one after another, making their way by putting the branches and vines aside; but doing it with caution, lest they should attract the eye of some lurking marksman. They took the lead by turns, each advancing about twenty yards at a time, and now and then hallooing to their men to follow. Some of the latter gradually entered the swamp, and followed a little distance in the rear.

They had now reached a more open part of the wood, and had glimpses of the rude fortress from between the trees. It was a mere breastwork, as we have said, of logs and branches, with blankets, buffalo robes, and the leathern covers of lodges, extended round the top as a screen. The movements of the leaders, as

they groped their way, had been descried by the sharp-sighted enemy. As Sinclair, who was in the advance, was putting some branches aside, he was shot through the body. He fell on the spot. "Take me to my brother," said he to Campbell. The latter gave him in charge to some of the men, who conveyed him out of the swamp.

Sublette now took the advance. As he was reconnoitering the fort, he perceived an Indian peeping through an aperture. In an instant his rifle was levelled and discharged, and the ball struck the savage in the eye. While he was reloading, he called to Campbell, and pointed out to him the hole; "Watch that place," said he, "and you will soon have a fair chance for a shot." Scarce had he uttered the words, when a ball struck him in the shoulder, and almost wheeled him round. His first thought was to take hold of his arm with his other hand, and move it up and down. He ascertained, to his satisfaction, that the bone was not broken. The next moment he was so faint that he could not stand. Campbell took him in his arms and carried him out of the thicket. The same shot that struck Sublette, wounded another man in the head.

A brisk fire was now opened by the mountaineers from the wood, answered occasionally

from the fort. Unluckily, the trappers and their allies, in searching for the fort, had got scattered, so that Wyeth, and a number of Nez Percés, approached the fort on the northwest side, while others did the same on the opposite quarter. A cross-fire thus took place, which occasionally did mischief to friends as well as foes. An Indian was shot down, close to Wyeth, by a ball which, he was convinced, had been sped from the rifle of a trapper on the other side of the fort.

The number of whites and their Indian allies, had by this time so much increased by arrivals from the rendezvous, that the Blackfeet were completely overmatched. They kept doggedly in their fort, however, making no offer of surrender. An occasional firing into the breastwork was kept up during the day. Now and then, one of the Indian allies, in bravado, would rush up to the fort, fire over the ramparts, tear off a buffalo robe or a scarlet blanket, and return with it in triumph to his comrades. Most of the savage garrison that fell, however, were killed in the first part of the attack.

At one time it was resolved to set fire to the fort; and the squaws belonging to the allies were employed to collect combustibles. This, however, was abandoned; the Nez Percés being unwilling to destroy the robes and blan-

kets, and other spoils of the enemy, which they felt sure would fall into their hands.

The Indians, when fighting, are prone to taunt and revile each other. During one of the pauses of the battle, the voice of the Blackfeet chief was heard.

"So long," said he, "as we had powder and ball, we fought you in the open field: when those were spent, we retreated here to die with our women and children. You may burn us in our fort; but, stay by our ashes, and ,you who are so hungry for fighting, will soon have enough. There are four hundred lodges of our brethren at hand. They will soon be here—their arms are strong—their hearts are big—they will avenge us!"

This speech was translated two or three times by Nez Percé and creole interpreters. By the time it was rendered into English, the chief was made to say, that four hundred lodges of his tribe were attacking the encampment at the other end of the valley. Every one now was for hurrying to the defense of the rendezvous. A party was left to keep watch upon the fort; the rest galloped off to the camp. As night came on, the trappers drew out of the swamp, and remained about the skirts of the wood. By morning, their companions returned from the rendezvous, with the report

that all was safe. As the day opened, they ventured within the swamp and approached the fort. All was silent. They advanced up to it without opposition. They entered: it had been abandoned in the night, and the Blackfeet had effected their retreat, carrying off their wounded on litters made of branches, leaving bloody traces on the herbage. The bodies of ten Indians were found within the fort: among them the one shot in the eye by Sublette. The Blackfeet afterwards reported that they had lost twenty-six warriors in this battle. Thirty-two horses were likewise found killed; among them were some of those recently carried off from Sublette's party, in the night; which showed that these were the very savages that had attacked him. They proved to be an advanced party of the main body of Blackfeet, which had been upon the trail of Sublette's party. Five white men and one half-breed were killed, and several wounded. Seven of the Nez Percés were also killed, and six wounded. They had an old chief, who was reputed as invulnerable. In the course of the action he was hit by a spent ball, and threw up blood; but his skin was unbroken. His people were now fully convinced that he was proof against powder and ball.

A striking circumstance is related as having

occurred the morning after the battle. As some of the trappers and their Indian allies were approaching the fort, through the woods, they beheld an Indian woman, of noble form and features, leaning against a tree. Their surprise at her lingering here alone, to fall into the hands of her enemies, was dispelled, when they saw the corpse of a warrior at her feet. Either she was so lost in grief as not to perceive their approach, or a proud spirit kept her silent and motionless. The Indians set up a yell, on discovering her, and before the trappers could interfere, her mangled body fell upon the corpse which she had refused to abandon. We have heard the anecdote discredited by one of the leaders who had been in the battle, but the fact may have taken place without his seeing it, and been concealed from him. It is an instance of female devotion, even to the death, which we are well disposed to believe and to record.

After the battle, the brigade of Milton Sublette, together with the free trappers, and Wyeth's New England band, remained some days at the rendezvous, to see if the main body of Blackfeet intended to make an attack; nothing of the kind occurring, they once more put themselves in motion, and proceeded on their route towards the southwest.

Captain Sublette having distributed his supplies, had intended to set off on his return to St. Louis, taking with him the peltries collected from the trappers and Indians. His wound, however, obliged him to postpone his departure. Several who were to have accompanied him, became impatient of this delay. Among these was a young Bostonian, Mr. Joseph More, one of the followers of Mr. Wyeth, who had seen enough of mountain life and savage warfare, and was eager to return to the abodes of civilization. He and six others, among whom were a Mr. Foy, of Mississippi, Mr. Alfred K. Stephens, of St. Louis, and two grandsons of the celebrated Daniel Boon, set out together, in advance of Sublette's party, thinking they would make their own way through the mountains.

It was just five days after the battle of the swamp, that these seven companions were making their way through Jackson's Hole, a valley not far from the three Tetons, when, as they were descending a hill, a party of Blackfeet that lay in ambush started up with terrific yells. The horse of the young Bostonian, who was in front, wheeled round with affright, and threw his unskilled rider. The young man scrambled up the side of the hill, but, unaccustomed to such wild scenes, lost his presence

of mind, and stood, as if paralyzed, on the edge of a bank, until the Blackfeet came up and slew him on the spot. His comrades had fled on the first alarm; but two of them, Foy and Stephens, seeing his danger, paused when they had got half-way up the hill, turned back, dismounted, and hastened to his assistance. Foy was instantly killed. Stephens was severely wounded, but escaped, to die five days afterwards. The survivors returned to the camp of Captain Sublette, bringing tidings of this new disaster. That hardy leader, as soon as he could bear the journey, set out on his return to St. Louis, accompanied by Campbell. As they had a number of pack-horses richly laden with peltries to convoy, they chose a different route through the mountains, out of the way, as they hoped, of the lurking bands of Blackfeet. They succeeded in making the frontier in safety. We remember to have seen them with their band, about two or three months afterwards, passing through a skirt of woodland in the upper part of Missouri. Their long cavalcade stretched in single file for nearly half a mile. Sublette still wore his arm in a sling. The mountaineers in their rude hunting dresses, armed with rifles, and roughly mounted, and leading their pack-horses down a hill of the forest, looked like banditti return-

ing with plunder. On the top of some of the packs were perched several half-breed children, perfect little imps, with wild black eyes glaring from among elf locks. These, I was told, were children of the trappers: pledges of love from their squaw spouses in the wilderness.

Chapter VII.

Retreat of the Blackfeet—Fontenelle's Camp in Danger—Captain Bonneville and the Blackfeet—Free Trappers—Their Character, Habits, Dress, Equipments, Horses—Game Fellows of the Mountains—Their Visit to the Camp—Good Fellowship and Good Cheer—A Carouse—A Swagger, a Brawl, and a Reconciliation.

THE Blackfeet warriors, when they effected their midnight retreat from their wild fastness in Pierre's Hole, fell back into the valley of the Seeds-ke-dee, or Green River, where they joined the main body of their band. The whole force amounted to several hundred fighting men, gloomy and exasperated by their late disaster. They had with them their wives and children, which incapacitated them for any bold and extensive enterprise of a warlike nature; but when, in the course of their wanderings, they came in sight of the encampment of Fontenelle, who had moved some distance up Green River Valley in search of the free trappers, they put up tremendous war-cries, and

advanced fiercely as if to attack it. Second thoughts caused them to moderate their fury. They recollected the severe lesson just received, and could not but remark the strength of Fontenelle's position, which had been chosen with great judgment.

A formal talk ensued. The Blackfeet said nothing of the late battle, of which Fontenelle had as yet received no accounts; the latter, however, knew the hostile and perfidious nature of these savages, and took care to inform them of the encampment of Captain Bonneville, that they might know there were more white men in the neighborhood.

The conference ended, Fontenelle sent a Delaware Indian of his party to conduct fifteen of the Blackfeet to the camp of Captain Bonneville. There were at that time two Crow Indians in the captain's camp, who had recently arrived there. They looked with dismay at this deputation from their implacable enemies, and gave the captain a terrible character of them, assuring him that the best thing he could possibly do, was to put those Blackfeet deputies to death on the spot. The captain, however, who had heard nothing of the conflict at Pierre's Hole, declined all compliance with this sage counsel. He treated the grim warriors with his usual urbanity. They

passed some little time at the camp, saw, no doubt, that everything was conducted with military skill and vigilance, and that such an enemy was not to be easily surprised, nor to be molested with impunity, and then departed, to report all they had seen to their comrades.

The two scouts which Captain Bonneville had sent out to seek for the band of free trappers, expected by Fontenelle, and to invite them to his camp, had been successful in their search, and on the 12th of August those worthies made their appearance. To explain the meaning of the appellation, free trapper, it is necessary to state the terms on which the men enlist in the service of the fur companies. Some have regular wages, and are furnished with weapons, horses, traps, and other requisites. These are under command, and bound to do every duty required of them connected with the service; such as hunting, trapping, loading and unloading the horses, mounting guard; and, in short, all the drudgery of the camp. These are the hired trappers.

The free trappers are a more independent class; and in describing them, we shall do little more than transcribe the graphic description of them by Captain Bonneville. "They come and go," says he, "when and where they please; provide their own horses, arms,

and other equipments; trap and trade on their own account, and dispose of their skins and peltries to the highest bidder. Sometimes, in a dangerous hunting ground, they attach themselves to the camp of some trader for protection. Here they come under some restrictions; they have to conform to the ordinary rules for trapping, and to submit to such restraints, and to take part in such general duties, as are established for the good order and safety of the camp. In return for this protection, and for their camp keeping, they are bound to dispose of all the beaver they take, to the trader who commands the camp, at a certain rate per skin; or, should they prefer seeking a market elsewhere, they are to make him an allowance, of from thirty to forty dollars for the whole hunt.

There is an inferior order, who, either from prudence or poverty, come to these dangerous hunting grounds without horses or accoutrements, and are furnished by the traders. These, like the hired trappers, are bound to exert themselves to the utmost in taking beaver, which, without skinning, they render in at the trader's lodge, where a stipulated price for each is placed to their credit. These, though generally included in the generic name of free trappers, have the more specific title of skin trappers.

The wandering whites who mingle for any length of time with the savages, have invariably a proneness to adopt savage habitudes; but none more so than the free trappers. It is a matter of vanity and ambition with them to discard everything that may bear the stamp of civilized life, and to adopt the manners, habits, dress, gesture, and even walk of the Indian. You cannot pay a free trapper a greater compliment, than to persuade him you have mistaken him for an Indian brave; and, in truth, the counterfeit is complete. His hair, suffered to attain to a great length, is carefully combed out, and either left to fall carelessly over his shoulders, or plaited neatly and tied up in otter skins, or parti-colored ribbons. A hunting-shirt of ruffled calico of bright dyes, or of ornamented leather, falls to his knees; below which, curiously fashioned leggins, ornamented with strings, fringes, and a profusion of hawks' bells, reach to a costly pair of moccasins of the finest Indian fabric, richly embroidered with beads. A blanket of scarlet, or some other bright color, hangs from his shoulders, and is girt round his waist with a red sash, in which he bestows his pistols, knife, and the stem of his Indian pipe, preparations for peace or war. His gun is lavishly decoated with brass tacks and vermilion, and pro-

vided with a fringed cover, occasionally of buckskin, ornamented here and there with a feather. His horse, the noble minister to the pride, pleasure, and profit of the mountaineer, is selected for his speed and spirit, and prancing gait, and holds a place in his estimation second only to himself. He shares largely of his bounty, and of his pride and pomp of trapping. He is caparisoned in the most dashing and fantastic style ; the bridles and crupper are weightily embossed with beads and cockades ; and head, mane, and tail are interwoven with abundance of eagles' plumes, which flutter in the wind. To complete this grotesque equipment, the proud animal is bestreaked and bespotted with vermilion, or with white clay, whichever presents the most glaring contrast to his real color.

Such is the account given by Captain Bonneville of these rangers of the wilderness, and their appearance at the camp was strikingly characteristic. They came dashing forward at full speed, firing their fusees, and yelling in Indian style. Their dark sunburnt faces, and long flowing hair, their leggins, flaps, moccasins, and richly-dyed blankets, and their painted horses gaudily caparisoned, gave them so much the air and appearance of Indians, that it was difficult to pursuade one's self that

they were white men, and had been brought up in civilized life.

Captain Bonneville, who was delighted with the game look of these cavaliers of the mountains, welcomed them heartily to his camp, and ordered a free allowance of grog to regale them, which soon put them in the most braggart spirit. They pronounced the captain the finest fellow in the world, and his men all *bons garçons*, jovial lads, and swore they would pass the day with them. They did so; and a day it was, of boast, swagger, and rodomontade. The prime bullies and braves among the free trappers had each his circle of novices, from among the captain's band; mere greenhorns, men unused to Indian life; *manguers de lard*, or pork eaters, as such new-comers are superciliously called by the veterans of the wilderness. These he would astonish and delight by the hour, with prodigious tales of his doings among the Indians; and of the wonders he had seen, and the wonders he had performed, in his adventurous peregrinations among the mountains.

In the evening, the free trappers drew off, and returned to the camp of Fontenelle, highly delighted with their visit and with their new acquaintances, and promising to return the following day. They kept their word: day after

day their visits were repeated; they became "hail fellow well met" with Captain Bonneville's men; treat after treat succeeded, until both parties got most potently convinced, or rather confounded, by liquor. Now came on confusion and uproar. The free trappers were no longer suffered to have all the swagger to themselves. The camp bullies and prime trappers of the party began to ruffle up, and to brag, in turn, of their perils and achievements. Each now tried to out-boast and out-talk the other; a quarrel ensued as a matter of course, and a general fight, according to frontier usage. The two factions drew out their forces for a pitched battle. They fell to work and belabored each other with might and main; kicks and cuffs and dry blows were as well bestowed as they were well merited, until, having fought to their heart's content, and been drubbed into a familiar acquaintance with each other's prowess and good qualities, they ended the fight by becoming firmer friends than they could have been rendered by a year's peacable companionship.

While Captain Bonneville amused himself by observing the habits and characteristics of this singular class of men, and indulged them, for the time, in all their vagaries, he profited by the opportunity to collect from them informa-

tion concerning the different parts of the country about which they had been accustomed to range; the characters of the tribes, and, in short, everything important to his enterprise. He also succeeded in securing the services of several to guide and aid him in his peregrinations among the mountains, and to trap for him during the ensuing season. Having strengthened his party with such valuable recruits, he felt in some measure consoled for the loss of the Delaware Indians, decoyed from him by Mr. Fontenelle.

Chapter VIII.

Plans for the Winter—Salmon River—Abundance of Salmon West of the Mountains—New Arrangements—Caches—Cerré's Detachment—Movements in Fontenelle's Camp—Departure of the Blackfeet—Their Fortunes—Wind Mountain Streams—Buckeye, the Delaware Hunter, and the Grizzly Bear—Bones of Murdered Travellers—Visit to Pierre's Hole—Traces of the Battle—Nez Percé Indians—Arrival at Salmon River.

THE information derived from the free trappers determined Captain Bonneville as to his further movements. He learnt that in the Green River Valley the winters were severe, the snow frequently falling to the depth of several feet; and that there was no good wintering ground in the neighborhood. The upper part of Salmon River was represented as far more eligible, besides being in an excellent beaver country; and thither the captain resolved to bend his course.

The Salmon River is one of the upper

branches of the Oregon or Columbia; and takes its rise from various sources, among a group of mountains to the northwest of the Wind River chain. It owes its name to the immense shoals of salmon which ascend it in the months of September and October. The salmon on the west side of the Rocky Mountains are, like the buffalo on the eastern plains, vast migratory supplies for the wants of man, that come and go with the seasons. As the buffalo in countless throngs find their certain way in the transient pasturage on the prairies, along the fresh banks of the rivers, and up every valley and green defile of the mountains, so the salmon, at their allotted seasons, regulated by a sublime and all-seeing Providence, swarm in myriads up the great rivers, and find their way up their main branches, and into the minutest tributary streams; so as to pervade the great arid plains, and to penetrate even among barren mountains. Thus wandering tribes are fed in the desert places of the wilderness, where there is no herbage for the animals of the chase, and where, but for these periodical supplies, it would be impossible for man to subsist.

The rapid currents of the rivers which run into the Pacific render the ascent of them very exhausting to the salmon. When the fish first

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run up the rivers, they are fat and in fine order. The struggle against impetuous streams and frequent rapids gradually renders them thin and weak, and great numbers are seen floating down the rivers on their backs. As the season advances and the water becomes chilled, they are flung in myriads on the shores, where the wolves and bears assemble to banquet on them. Often they rot in such quantities along the river banks, as to taint the atmosphere. They are commonly from two to three feet long.

Captain Bonneville now made his arrangements for the autumn and the winter. The nature of the country through which he was about to travel rendered it impossible to proceed with wagons. He had more goods and supplies of various kinds, also, than were required for present purposes, or than could be conveniently transported on horseback; aided, therefore, by a few confidential men, he made *caches*, or secret pits, during the night, when all the rest of the camp were asleep, and in these deposited the superfluous effects, together with the wagons. All traces of the *caches* were then carefully obliterated. This is a common expedient with the traders and trappers of the mountains. Having no established posts and magazines, they make these

caches or deposits at certain points, whither they repair occasionally, for supplies. It is an expedient derived from the wandering tribes of Indians.

Many of the horses were still so weak and lame as to be unfit for a long scramble through the mountains. These were collected into one cavalcade, and given in charge to an experienced trapper, of the name of Matthieu. He was to proceed westward, with a brigade of trappers, to Bear River; a stream to the west of the Green River or Colorado, where there was good pasturage for the horses. In this neighborhood it was expected he would meet the Shoshonie villages or bands,* on their yearly migrations, with whom he was to trade for peltries and provisions. After he had traded with these people, finished his trappings, and recruited the strength of the horses, he was to proceed to Salmon River and rejoin Captain Bonneville, who intended to fix his quarters there for the winter.

* A *village* of Indians, in trappers' language, does not always imply a fixed community; but often a wandering horde or band. The Shoshonies, like most of the mountain tribes, have no settled residences; but are a nomadic people, dwelling in tents or lodges, and shifting their encampments from place to place, according as fish and game abound.

While these arrangements were in progress in the camp of Captain Bonneville, there was a sudden bustle and stir in the camp of Fontenelle. One of the partners of the American Fur Company had arrived, in all haste, from the rendezvous at Pierre's Hole, in quest of the supplies. The competition between the two rival companies was just now at its height, and prosecuted with unusual zeal. The tramontane concerns of the Rocky Mountain Fur Company were managed by two resident partners, Fitzpatrick and Bridger; those of the American Fur Company, by Vanderburgh and Dripps. The latter were ignorant of the mountain regions, but trusted to make up by vigilance and activity for their want of knowledge of the country.

Fitzpatrick, an experienced trader and trapper, knew the evils of competition in the same hunting grounds, and had proposed that the two companies should divide the country, so as to hunt in different directions: this proposition being rejected, he had exerted himself to get first into the field. His exertions, as has already been shown, were effectual. The early arrival of Sublette, with supplies, had enabled the various brigades of the Rocky Mountain Company to start off to their respective hunting grounds. Fitzpatrick himself,

with his associate, Bridger, had pushed off with a strong party of trappers, for a prime beaver country to the north-northwest.

This had put Vanderburgh upon his mettle. He had hastened on to meet Fontenelle. Finding him at his camp in Green River Valley, he immediately furnished himself with the supplies; put himself at the head of the free trappers and Delawares, and set off with all speed, determined to follow hard upon the heels of Fitzpatrick and Bridger. Of the adventures of these parties among the mountains, and the disastrous effects of their competition, we shall have occasion to treat in a future chapter.

Fontenelle having now delivered his supplies and accomplished his errand, struck his tents and set off on his return to the Yellowstone. Captain Bonneville and his band, therefore, remained alone in the Green River Valley; and their situation might have been perilous, had the Blackfeet band still lingered in the vicinity. Those marauders, however, had been dismayed at finding so many resolute and well-appointed parties of white men in this neighborhood. They had, therefore, abandoned this part of the country, passing over the head-waters of the Green River, and bending their course towards the Yellowstone. Misfortune pursued them. Their route lay

through the country of their deadly enemies, the Crows. In the Wind River Valley, which lies east of the mountains, they were encountered by a powerful war party of that tribe, and completely put to rout. Forty of them were killed, many of their women and children captured, and the scattered fugitives hunted like wild beasts, until they were completely chased out of the Crow country.

On the 22d of August Captain Bonneville broke up his camp, and set out on his route for Salmon River. His baggage was arranged in packs, three to a mule, or pack-horse; one being disposed on each side of the animal, and one on the top; the three forming a load of from one hundred and eighty to two hundred and twenty pounds. This is the trappers' style of loading their pack-horses; his men, however, were inexpert at adjusting the packs; which were prone to get loose and slip off; so that it was necessary to keep a rear-guard to assist in reloading. A few days' experience, however, brought them into proper training.

Their march lay up the valley of the Seeds-ke-dee, overlooked to the right by the lofty peaks of the Wind River Mountains. From bright little lakes and fountain-heads of this remarkable bed of mountains, poured forth the tributary streams of the Seeds-ke-dee. Some

came rushing down gullies and ravines; others tumbling in crystal cascades from inaccessible clefts and rocks, and others winding their way in rapid and pellucid currents across the valley, to throw themselves into the main river. So transparent were these waters, that the trout with which they abounded could be seen gliding about as if in the air; and their pebbly beds were distinctly visible at the depth of many feet. This beautiful and diaphanous quality of the Rocky Mountain streams, prevails for a long time after they have mingled their waters and swollen into important rivers.

Issuing from the upper part of the valley, Captain Bonneville continued to the east-northeast, across rough and lofty ridges, and deep rocky defiles, extremely fatiguing both to man and horse. Among his hunters was a Delaware Indian who had remained faithful to him. His name was Buckeye. He had often prided himself on his skill and success in coping with the grizzly bear, that terror of the hunters. Though crippled in the left arm, he declared he had no hesitation to close with a wounded bear, and attack him with a sword. If armed with a rifle, he was willing to brave the animal when in full force and fury. He had twice an opportunity of proving his prowess, in the course of this mountain journey, and was each time suc-

cessful. His mode was to seat himself upon the ground, with his rifle cocked and resting on his lame arm. Thus prepared, he would await the approach of the bear with perfect coolness, nor pull trigger until he was close at hand. In each instance, he laid the monster dead upon the spot.

A march of three or four days, through savage and lonely scenes, brought Captain Bonneville to the fatal defile of Jackson's Hole, where poor More and Foy had been surprised and murdered by the Blackfeet. The feelings of the captain were shocked at beholding the bones of these unfortunate young men bleaching among the rocks; and he caused them to be decently interred.

On the 3d of September he arrived on the summit of a mountain which commanded a full view of the eventful valley of Pierre's Hole; whence he could trace the windings of its stream through green meadows and forests of willow and cotton-wood, and have a prospect, between distant mountains, of the lava plains of Snake River, dimly spread forth like a sleeping ocean below.

After enjoying this magnificent prospect, he descended into the valley, and visited the scenes of the late desperate conflict. There were the remains of the rude fortress in the

swamp, shattered by rifle shot, and strewed with the mingled bones of savages and horses. There was the late populous and noisy rendezvous, with the traces of trappers' camps and Indian lodges; but their fires were extinguished, the motley assemblage of trappers and hunters, white traders and Indian braves, had all dispersed to different points of the wilderness, and the valley had relapsed into its pristine solitude and silence.

That night the captain encamped upon the battle ground; the next day he resumed his toilsome peregrinations through the mountains. For upwards of two weeks he continued his painful march; both men and horses suffering excessively at times from hunger and thirst. At length, on the 19th of September, he reached the upper waters of Salmon River.

The weather was cold, and there were symptoms of an impending storm. The night set in, but Buckeye, the Delaware Indian, was missing. He had left the party early in the morning, to hunt by himself, according to his custom. Fears were entertained lest he should lose his way and become bewildered in tempestuous weather. These fears increased on the following morning, when a violent snowstorm came on, which soon covered the earth to the depth of several inches. Captain Bonneville

immediately encamped, and sent out scouts in every direction. After some search Buckeye was discovered, quietly seated at a considerable distance in the rear, waiting the expected approach of the party, not knowing that they had passed, the snow having covered their trail.

On the ensuing morning they resumed their march at an early hour, but had not proceeded far when the hunters, who were beating up the country in the advance, came galloping back, making signals to encamp, and crying "Indians! Indians!"

Captain Bonneville immediately struck into a skirt of wood and prepared for action. The savages were now seen trooping over the hills in great numbers. One of them left the main body and came forward singly, making signals of peace. He announced them as a band of Nez Percés* or Pierced-nosed Indians, friendly to the whites, whereupon an invitation was returned by Captain Bonneville, for them to come and encamp with him. They halted for a short time to make their toilette, an operation as important with an Indian warrior as with a

* We should observe that this tribe is universally called by its French name, which is pronounced by the trappers, *Nepercy*. There are two main branches of this tribe, the upper Nepercys and the lower Nepercys, as we shall show hereafter.

fashionable beauty. This done, they arranged themselves in martial style, the chiefs leading the van, the braves following in a long line, painted and decorated, and topped off with fluttering plumes. In this way they advanced, shouting and singing, firing off their fusees, and clashing their shields. The two parties encamped hard by each other. The Nez Percés were on a hunting expedition, but had been almost famished on their march. They had no provisions left but a few dried salmon, yet finding the white men equally in want, they generously offered to share even this meagre pittance, and frequently repeated the offer, with an earnestness that left no doubt of their sincerity. Their generosity won the heart of Captain Bonneville, and produced the most cordial good-will on the part of his men. For two days that the parties remained in company, the most amicable intercourse prevailed, and they parted the best of friends. Captain Bonneville detached a few men, under Mr. Cerré, an able leader, to accompany the Nez Percés on their hunting expedition, and to trade with them for meat for the winter's supply. After this, he proceeded down the river about five miles below the forks, when he came to a halt on the 26th of September, to establish his winter quarters.

Chapter IX.

Horses Turned Loose—Preparations for Winter Quarters—Hungry Times—Nez Percés, their Honesty, Piety, Pacific Habits, Religious Ceremonies—Captain Bonneville's Conversation with them—Their Love of Gambling.

IT was gratifying to Captain Bonneville, after so long and toilsome a course of travel, to relieve his poor jaded horses of the burdens under which they were almost ready to give out, and to behold them rolling upon the grass, and taking a long repose after all their sufferings. Indeed, so exhausted were they, that those employed under the saddle were no longer capable of hunting for the daily subsistence of the camp.

All hands now set to work to prepare a winter cantonment. A temporary fortification was thrown up for the protection of the party; a secure and comfortable pen, into which the horses could be driven at night; and huts were built for the reception of the merchandise.

This done, Captain Bonneville made a distribution of his forces: twenty men were to remain with him in garrison to protect the property; the rest were organized into three brigades, and sent off in different directions, to subsist themselves in hunting the buffalo, until the snow should become too deep.

Indeed, it would have been impossible to provide for the whole party in this neighborhood. It was at the extreme western limit of the buffalo range, and these animals had recently been completely hunted out of the neighborhood by the Nez Percés, so that, although the hunters of the garrison were continually on the alert, ranging the country round, they brought in scarce game sufficient to keep famine from the door. Now and then there was a scanty meal of fish or wild fowl, occasionally an antelope; but frequently the cravings of hunger had to be appeased with roots, or the flesh of wolves and muskrats. Rarely could the inmates of the cantonment boast of having made a full meal, and never of having wherewithal for the morrow. In this way they starved along until the 8th of October, when they were joined by a party of five families of Nez Percés, who in some measure reconciled them to the hardships of their situation, by exhibiting a lot still more desti-

tute. A more forlorn set they had never encountered: they had not a morsel of meat or fish; nor anything to subsist on, excepting roots, wild rosebuds, the barks of certain plants, and other vegetable productions; neither had they any weapon for hunting or defense, excepting an old spear: yet the poor fellows made no murmur nor complaint; but seemed accustomed to their hard fare. If they could not teach the white men their practical stoicism, they at least made them acquainted with the edible properties of roots and wild rosebuds, and furnished them with a supply from their own store. The necessities of the camp at length became so urgent, that Captain Bonneville determined to dispatch a party to the Horse Prairie, a plain to the north of his cantonment, to procure a supply of provisions. When the men were about to depart, he proposed to the Nez Percés that they, or some of them, should join the hunting party. To his surprise, they promptly declined. He inquired the reason for their refusal, seeing that they were in nearly as starving a situation as his own people. They replied that it was a sacred day with them, and the Great Spirit would be angry should they devote it to hunting. They offered, however, to accompany the party if it would delay its departure until the following

day ; but this the pinching demands of hunger would not permit, and the detachment proceeded.

A few days afterwards, four of them signified to Captain Bonneville that they were about to hunt. "What!" exclaimed he, "without guns or arrows ; and with only one old spear? What do you expect to kill?" They smiled among themselves, but made no answer. Preparatory to the chase, they performed some religious rites, and offered up to the Great Spirit a few short prayers for safety and success ; then, having received the blessings of their wives, they leaped upon their horses and departed, leaving the whole party of Christian spectators amazed and rebuked by this lesson of faith and dependence on a supreme and benevolent Being. "Accustomed," adds Captain Bonneville, "as I had heretofore been, to find the wretched Indian revelling in blood, and stained by every vice which can degrade human nature, I could scarcely realize the scene which I had witnessed. Wonder at such unaffected tenderness and piety, where it was least to have been sought, contended in all our bosoms with shame and confusion, at receiving such pure and wholesome instructions from creatures so far below us in all the arts and comforts of life." The simple prayers of the

poor Indians were not unheard. In the course of four or five days they returned, laden with meat. Captain Bonneville was curious to know how they had attained such success with such scanty means. They gave him to understand that they had chased the herds of buffalo at full speed, until they tired them down, when they easily dispatched them with the spear, and made use of the same weapon to flay the carcasses. To carry through their lesson to their Christian friends, the poor savages were as charitable as they had been pious, and generously shared with them the spoils of their hunting; giving them food enough to last for several days.

A further and more intimate intercourse with this tribe gave Captain Bonneville still greater cause to admire their strong devotional feeling. "Simply to call these people religious," says he, "would convey but a faint idea of the deep hue of piety and devotion which pervades their whole conduct. Their honesty is immaculate, and their purity of purpose, and their observance of the rites of their religion, are most uniform and remarkable. They are, certainly, more like a nation of saints than a horde of savages."

In fact, the anti-belligerent policy of this tribe may have sprung from the doctrines of

Christian charity, for it would appear that they had imbibed some notions of the Christian faith from Catholic missionaries and traders who had been among them. They even had a rude calendar of the fasts and festivals of the Romish Church, and some traces of its ceremonials. These have become blended with their own wild rites, and present a strange medley, civilized and barbarous. On the Sabbath, men, women, and children array themselves in their best style, and assemble round a pole erected at the head of the camp. Here they go through a wild fantastic ceremonial; strongly resembling the religious dance of the Shaking Quakers; but from its enthusiasm, much more striking and impressive. During the intervals of the ceremony the principal chiefs, who officiate as priests, instruct them in their duties, and exhort them to virtue and good deeds.

"There is something antique and patriarchal," observes Captain Bonneville, "in this union of the offices of leader and priest; as there is in many of their customs and manners, which are all strongly imbued with religion."

The worthy captain, indeed, appears to have been strongly interested by this gleam of unlooked-for light amidst the darkness of the wilderness. He exerted himself, during his

sojourn among this simple and well-disposed people, to inculcate, as far as he was able, the gentle and humanizing precepts of the Christian faith, and to make them acquainted with the leading points of its history: and it speaks highly for the purity and benignity of his heart, that he derived unmixed happiness from the task.

"Many a time," says he, "was my little lodge thronged, or rather piled with hearers, for they lay on the ground, one leaning over the other, until there was no further room, all listening with greedy ears to the wonders which the Great Spirit had revealed to the white man. No other subject gave them half the satisfaction, or commanded half the attention; and but few scenes in my life remain so freshly on my memory, or are so pleasurably recalled to my contemplation, as these hours of intercourse with a distant and benighted race in the midst of the desert."

The only excesses indulged in by this temperate and exemplary people, appear to be gambling and horse-racing. In these they engage with an eagerness that amounts to infatuation. Knots of gamblers will assemble before one of their lodge fires, early in the evening, and remain absorbed in the chances and changes of the game until long after dawn

of the following day. As night advances, they wax warmer and warmer. Bets increase in amount, one loss only serves to lead to a greater, until in the course of a single night's gambling, the richest chief may become the poorest varlet in the camp.

Chapter X.

Blackfeet in the Horse Prairie—Search after the Hunters—Difficulties and Dangers—A Card Party in the Wilderness—The Card Party Interrupted—"Old Sledge," a Losing Game—Visitors to the Camp—Iroquois Hunters—Hanging-Eared Indians.

ON the 12th of October, two young Indians of the Nez Percé tribe arrived at Captain Bonneville's encampment. They were on their way homeward, but had been obliged to swerve from their ordinary route through the mountains, by deep snows. Their new route took them through the Horse Prairie. In traversing it, they had been attracted by the distant smoke of a camp-fire, and, on stealing near to reconnoitre, had discovered a war party of Blackfeet. They had several horses with them; and, as they generally go on foot on warlike excursions, it was concluded that these horses had been captured in the course of their maraudings.

This intelligence awakened solicitude on the mind of Captain Bonneville, for the party of hunters whom he had sent to that neighborhood; and the Nez Percés, when informed of the circumstance, shook their heads, and declared the belief that the horses they had seen had been stolen from that very party.

Anxious for information on the subject, Captain Bonneville dispatched two hunters to beat up the country in that direction. They searched in vain; not a trace of the men could be found; but they got into a region destitute of game, where they were wellnigh famished. At one time, they were three entire days without a mouthful of food; at length they beheld a buffalo grazing at the foot of a mountain. After manœuvring so as to get within shot, they fired, but merely wounded him. He took to flight, and they followed him over hill and dale, with the eagerness and perseverance of starving men. A more lucky shot brought him to the ground. Stanfield sprang upon him, plunged his knife into his throat, and allayed his raging hunger by drinking his blood. A fire was instantly kindled beside the carcass, when the two hunters cooked, and ate again and again, until, perfectly gorged, they sank to sleep before their hunting fire. On the following morning they rose early, made another

hearty meal, then loading themselves with buffalo meat, set out on their return to the camp, to report the fruitlessness of their mission.

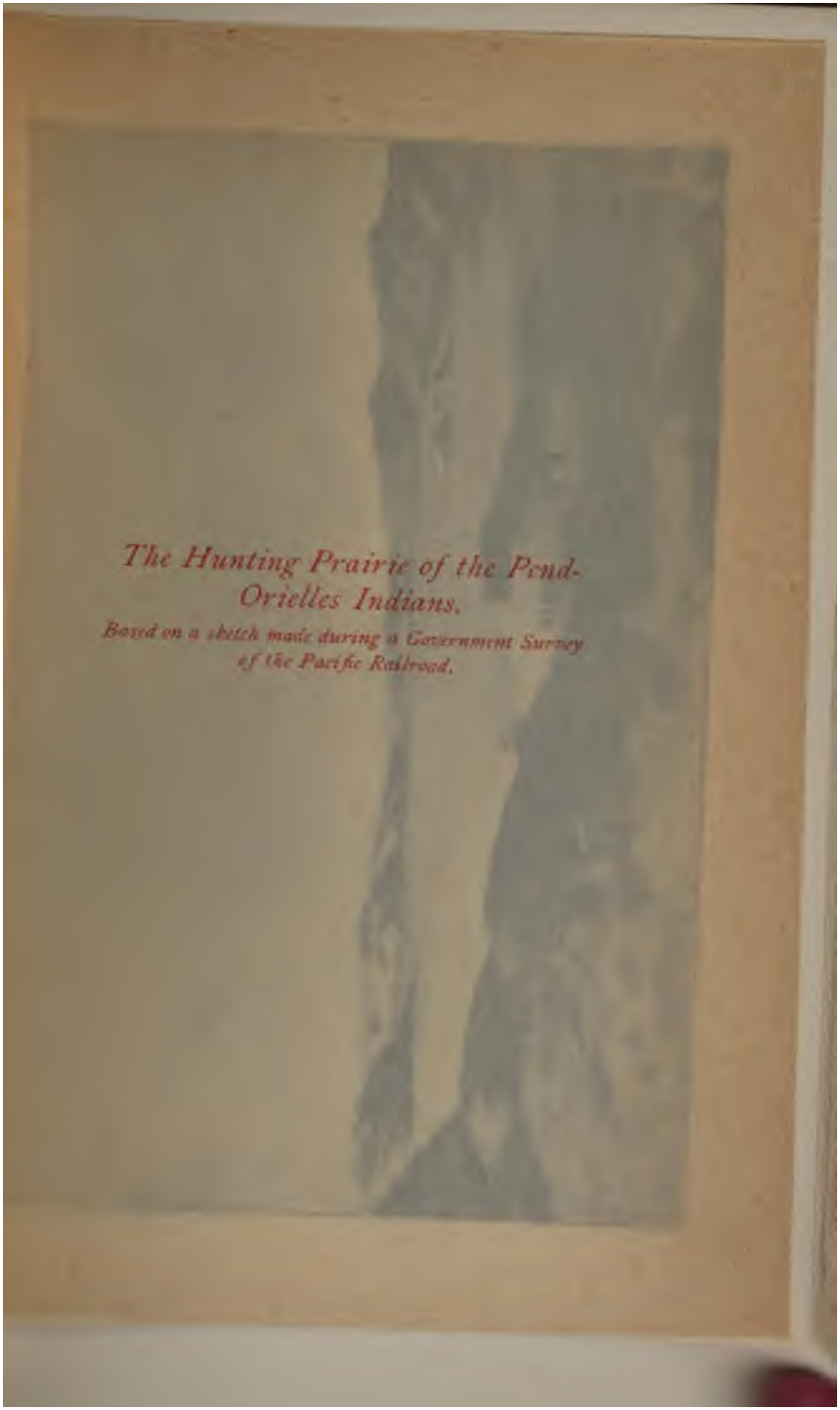
At length, after six weeks' absence, the hunters made their appearance, and were received with joy, proportioned to the anxiety that had been felt on their account. They had hunted with success on the prairie, but, while busy drying buffalo meat, were joined by a few panic-stricken Flatheads, who informed them that a powerful band of Blackfeet were at hand. The hunters immediately abandoned the dangerous hunting-ground, and accompanied the Flatheads to their village. Here they found Mr. Cerré, and the detachment of hunters sent with him to accompany the hunting party of the Nez Percés.

After remaining some time at the village, until they supposed the Blackfeet to have left the neighborhood, they set off, with some of Mr. Cerré's men, for the cantonment of Salmon River, where they arrived without accident. They informed Captain Bonneville, however, that, not far from his quarters, they had found a wallet of fresh meat and a cord, which they supposed had been left by some prowling Blackfeet. A few days afterwards, Mr. Cerré, with the remainder of his men, likewise arrived at the cantonment.

Mr. Walker, one of the subleaders, who had gone, with a band of twenty hunters, to range the country just beyond the Horse Prairie, had, likewise, his share of adventures with the all-pervading Blackfeet. At one of his encampments, the guard stationed to keep watch round the camp grew weary of their duty, and feeling a little too secure, and too much at home on these prairies, retired to a small grove of willows, to amuse themselves with a social game of cards, called "old sledge," which is as popular among the trampers of the prairies, as whist or ecarté among the polite circles of the cities. From the midst of their sport, they were suddenly roused by a discharge of fire-arms, and a shrill war-whoop. Starting on their feet, and snatching up their rifles, they beheld in dismay their horses and mules already in possession of the enemy, who had stolen upon the camp unperceived, while they were spell-bound by the magic of "old sledge." The Indians sprang upon the animals bare-backed, and endeavored to urge them off under a galling fire, that did some execution. The mules, however, confounded by the hurly-burly, and disliking their new riders, kicked up their heels and dismounted half of them, in spite of their horsemanship. This threw the rest into confusion; they endeavored to

protect their unhorsed comrades from the furious assaults of the whites; but, after a scene of "confusion worse confounded," horses and mules were abandoned, and the Indians betook themselves to the bushes. Here they quickly scratched holes in the earth about two feet deep, in which they prostrated themselves, and while thus screened from the shots of the white men, were enabled to make such use of their bows and arrows and fusees as to repulse their assailants, and to effect their retreat. This adventure threw a temporary stigma upon the game of "old sledge."

In the course of the autumn, four Iroquois hunters, driven by the snow from their hunting grounds, made their appearance at the cantonment. They were kindly welcomed, and during their sojourn made themselves useful in a variety of ways, being excellent trappers and first-rate woodsmen. They were of the remnants of a party of Iroquois hunters, that came from Canada into these mountain regions many years previously, in the employ of the Hudson's Bay Company. They were led by a brave chieftain, named Pierre, who fell by the hands of the Blackfeet, and gave his name to the fated valley of Pierre's Hole. This branch of the Iroquois tribe has ever since remained among these mountains,



The Hunting Prairie of the Pend-Orielles Indians.

Based on a sketch made during a Government Survey of the Pacific Railroad.

tions of morality, a deep reverence for an overruling Spirit, and a respect for the rights of their fellow-men. In one respect, their religion partakes of the pacific doctrines of the Quakers. They hold that the Great Spirit is displeased with all nations who wantonly engage in war; they abstain, therefore, from all aggressive hostilities. But though thus unoffending in their policy, they are called upon continually to wage defensive warfare, especially with the Blackfeet; with whom, in the course of their hunting expeditions, they come in frequent collision, and have desperate battles. Their conduct as warriors is without fear or reproach, and they can never be driven to abandon their hunting grounds.

Like most savages, they are firm believers in dreams, and in the power and efficacy of charms and amulets, or medicines, as they term them. Some of their braves, also, who have had numerous hair-breadth 'scapes, like the old Nez Percé chief in the battle of Pierre's Hole, are believed to wear a charmed life, and to be bullet-proof. Of these gifted beings marvellous anecdotes are related, which are most potently believed by their fellow-savages, and sometimes almost credited by the white hunters.

Chapter XI.

Rival Trapping Parties—Manœuvring—A Desperate Game—Vanderburgh and the Blackfeet—Deserted Camp Fires—A Dark Defile—An Indian Ambush—A Fierce Melée—Fatal Consequences—Fitzpatrick and Bridger—Trappers' Precautions—Meeting with the Blackfeet—More Fighting—Anecdote of a Young Mexican and an Indian Girl.

WHILE Captain Bonneville and his men are sojourning among the Nez Percés, on Salmon River, we will inquire after the fortunes of those doughty rivals of the Rocky Mountain and American Fur Companies, who started off for the trapping grounds to the north-northwest.

Fitzpatrick and Bridger, of the former company, as we have already shown, having received their supplies, had taken the lead, and hoped to have the first sweep of the hunting ground. Vanderburgh and Dripps, however, the two resident partners of the opposite company, by extraordinary exertions, were en-

abled soon to put themselves upon their traces, and pressed forward with such speed as to overtake them just as they had reached the heart of the beaver country. In fact, being ignorant of the best trapping grounds, it was their object to follow on and profit by the superior knowledge of the other party.

Nothing could equal the chagrin of Fitzpatrick and Bridger, at being dogged by their inexperienced rivals; especially after their offer to divide the country with them. They tried in every way to blind and baffle them, to steal a march upon them, or lead them on a wrong scent; but all in vain. Vanderburgh made up, by activity and intelligence, for his ignorance of the country; was always wary, always on the alert; discovered every movement of his rivals, however secret, and was not to be eluded or misled.

Fitzpatrick and his colleague now lost all patience; since the others persisted in following them, they determined to give them an unprofitable chase, and to sacrifice the hunting season, rather than share the products with their rivals. They accordingly took up their line of march down the course of the Missouri, keeping the main Blackfoot trail, and tramping doggedly forward, without stopping to set a single trap. The others beat the hoof after

them for some time, but by degrees began to perceive that they were on a wild-goose chase, and getting into a country perfectly barren to the trapper. They now came to a halt, and bethought themselves how to make up for lost time, and improve the remainder of the season. It was thought best to divide their forces and try different trapping grounds. While Dripps went in one direction, Vanderburgh, with about fifty men, proceeded in another. The latter, in his headlong march, had got into the very heart of the Blackfoot country, yet seems to have been unconscious of his danger. As his scouts were out one day, they came upon the traces of a recent band of savages. There were the deserted fires still smoking, surrounded by the carcasses of buffaloes just killed. It was evident a party of Blackfeet had been frightened from their hunting camp, and had retreated, probably to seek reinforcements. The scouts hastened back to the camp, and told Vanderburgh what they had seen. He made light of the alarm, and, taking nine men with him, galloped off to reconnoitre for himself. He found the deserted camp just as they had represented it; there lay the carcasses of buffaloes, partly dismembered; there were the smouldering fires, still sending up their wreaths of smoke; everything bore traces of recent

and hasty retreat; and gave reason to believe that the savages were still lurking in the neighborhood. With heedless daring, Vanderburgh put himself upon their trail, to trace them to their place of concealment. It led him over prairies, and through skirts of woodland, until it entered a dark and dangerous ravine. Vanderburgh pushed in, without hesitation, followed by his little band. They soon found themselves in a gloomy dell, between steep banks overhung with trees; where the profound silence was only broken by the tramp of their own horses.

Suddenly the horrid war-whoop burst on their ears, mingled with the sharp report of rifles, and a legion of savages sprang from their concealments, yelling, and shaking their buffalo robes to frighten the horses. Vanderburgh's horse fell, mortally wounded by the first discharge. In his fall, he pinned his rider to the ground; who called in vain upon his men to assist in extricating him. One was shot down and scalped a few paces distant; most of the others were severely wounded, and sought their safety in flight. The savages approached to dispatch the unfortunate leader, as he lay struggling beneath his horse. He had still his rifle in his hand, and his pistols in his belt. The first savage that advanced

received the contents of the rifle in his breast, and fell dead upon the spot; but before Vanderburgh could draw a pistol, a blow from a tomahawk laid him prostrate, and he was dispatched by repeated wounds.

Such was the fate of Major Henry Vanderburgh, one of the best and worthiest leaders of the American Fur Company; who, by his manly bearing and dauntless courage, is said to have made himself universally popular among the bold-hearted rovers of the wilderness.

Those of the little band who escaped fled in consternation to the camp, and spread direful reports of the force and ferocity of the enemy. The party, being without a head, were in complete confusion and dismay, and made a precipitate retreat, without attempting to recover the remains of their butchered leader. They made no halt until they reached the encampment of the Pends Oreilles, or Hanging-Ears, where they offered a reward for the recovery of the body, but without success; it never could be found.

In the meantime Fitzpatrick and Bridger, of the Rocky Mountain Company, fared but little better than their rivals. In their eagerness to mislead them, they had betrayed themselves into danger, and got into a region infested with

the Blackfeet. They soon found that foes were on the watch for them; but they were experienced in Indian warfare, and not to be surprised at night, nor drawn into an ambush in the daytime. As the evening advanced, the horses were all brought in and picketed, and a guard was stationed round the camp. At the earliest streak of day one of the leaders would mount his horse, and gallop off full speed for about half a mile; then look round for Indian trails, to ascertain whether there had been any lurkers round the camp; returning slowly, he would reconnoitre every ravine and thicket where there might be an ambush. This done, he would gallop off in an opposite direction and repeat the same scrutiny. Finding all things safe, the horses would be turned loose to graze, but always under the eye of a guard.

A caution equally vigilant was observed in the march, on approaching any defile or place where an enemy might lie in wait; and scouts were always kept in the advance, or along the ridges and rising grounds on the flanks.

At length, one day, a large band of Blackfeet appeared in the open field, but in the vicinity of rocks and cliffs. They kept at a wary distance, but made friendly signs. The trappers replied in the same way, but likewise kept aloof. A small party of Indians now ad-

vanced, bearing the pipe of peace ; they were met by an equal number of white men, and they formed a group, midway between the two bands, where the pipe was circulated from hand to hand, and smoked with all due ceremony. An instance of natural affection took place at this pacific meeting. Among the free trappers in the Rocky Mountain band, was a spirited young Mexican, named Loretto ; who, in the course of his wanderings, had ransomed a beautiful Blackfoot girl from a band of Crows by whom she had been captured. He made her his wife, after the Indian style, and she had followed his fortunes ever since, with the most devoted affection.

Among the Blackfeet warriors who advanced with the calumet of peace, she recognized a brother. Leaving her infant with Loretto, she rushed forward and threw herself upon her brother's neck ; who clasped his long-lost sister to his heart, with a warmth of affection but little compatible with the reputed stoicism of the savage.

While this scene was taking place, Bridger left the main body of trappers, and rode slowly towards the group of smokers, with his rifle resting across the pommel of his saddle. The chief of the Blackfeet stepped forward to meet him. From some unfortunate feeling of dis-

trust, Bridger cocked his rifle just as the chief was extending his hand in friendship. The quick ear of the savage caught the click of the lock; in a twinkling, he grasped the barrel, forcing the muzzle downward, and the contents were discharged into the earth at his feet. His next movement was to wrest the weapon from the hand of Bridger, and fell him with it to the earth. He might have found this no easy task, had not the unfortunate leader received two arrows in his back during the struggle.

The chief now sprang into the vacant saddle and galloped off to his band. A wild hurry-skurry scene ensued; each party took the banks, the rocks, and trees, to gain favorable positions, and an irregular firing was kept up on either side, without much effect. The Indian girl had been hurried off by her people, at the outbreak of the affray. She would have returned, through the dangers of the fight, to her husband and her child, but was prevented by her brother. The young Mexican saw her struggles and her agony, and heard her piercing cries. With a generous impulse, he caught up the child in his arms, rushed forward, regardless of Indian shaft or rifle, and placed it in safety upon her bosom. Even the savage heart of the Blackfoot chief was reached

by this noble deed. He pronounced Loretto a madman for his temerity, but bade him depart in peace. The young Mexican hesitated: he urged to have his wife restored to him, but her brother interfered, and the countenance of the chief grew dark. The girl, he said, belonged to his tribe—she must remain with her people. Loretto would still have lingered, but his wife implored him to depart, lest his life should be endangered. It was with the greatest reluctance that he returned to his companions.

The approach of night put an end to the skirmishing fire of the adverse parties, the savages drew off without renewing their hostilities. We cannot but remark, that both in this affair and in that of Pierre's Hole, the affray commenced by a hostile act on the part of white men, at the moment when the Indian warrior was extending the hand of amity. In neither instance, as far as circumstances have been stated to us by different persons, do we see any reason to suspect the savage chiefs of perfidy in their overtures of friendship. They advanced in the confiding way usual among Indians when they bear the pipe of peace, and consider themselves sacred from attack. If we violate the sanctity of this ceremonial, by any hostile movement on our part, it is we who incur the charge of

faithlessness; and we doubt not that in both these instances the white men have been considered by the Blackfeet as the aggressors, and have, in consequeuce, been held up as men not to be trusted.

A word to conclude the romantic incident of Loretto and his Indian bride. A few months subsequent to the event just related, the young Mexican settled his accounts with the Rocky Mountain Company, and obtained his discharge. He then left his comrades and set off to rejoin his wife and child among her people; and we understand that, at the time we are writing these pages, he resides at a trading-house established of late by the American Fur Company, in the Blackfoot country, where he acts as an interpreter and has his Indian girl with him.

Chapter XII.

A Winter Camp in the Wilderness—Medley of Trappers, Hunters, and Indians—Scarcity of Game—New Arrangements in the Camp—Detachments Sent to a Distance—Carelessness of the Indians when Encamped—Sickness among the Indians—Excellent Character of the Nez Percés—The Captain's Effort as a Pacificator—A Nez Percé's Argument in Favor of War—Robberies by the Blackfeet—Long-Suffering of the Nez Percés—a Hunter's Elysium among the Mountains—More Robberies — The Captain Preaches up a Crusade—The Effect upon his Hearers.

FOR the greater part of the month of November, Captain Bonneville remained in his temporary post on Salmon River. He was now in the full enjoyment of his wishes; leading a hunter's life in the heart of the wilderness, with all its wild populace around him. Besides his own people, motley in character and costume—creole, Kentuckian, Indian, half-breed, hired trapper, and free

trapper—he was surrounded by encampments of Nez Percés and Flatheads, with their droves of horses covering the hills and plains. It was, he declares, a wild and bustling scene. The hunting parties of white men and red men, continually sallying forth and returning; the groups at the various encampments, some cooking, some working, some amusing themselves at different games; the neighing of horses, the braying of asses, the resounding strokes of the axe, the sharp report of the rifle, the whoop, the halloo, and the frequent burst of laughter, all in the midst of a region suddenly roused from perfect silence and loneliness by this transient hunters' sojourn, realized, he says, the idea of a "populous solitude."

The kind and genial character of the captain had, evidently, its influence on the opposite races thus fortuitously congregated together. The most perfect harmony prevailed between them. The Indians, he says, were friendly in their dispositions, and honest to the most scrupulous degree, in their intercourse with the white men. It is true they were somewhat importunate in their curiosity, and apt to be continually in the way, examining everything with keen and prying eye, and watching every movement of the white men.

All this, however, was borne with great good-humor by the captain, and through his example by his men. Indeed, throughout all his transactions, he shows himself the friend of the poor Indians, and his conduct towards them is above all praise.

The Nez Percés, the Flatheads, and the Hanging-Ears pride themselves upon the number of their horses, of which they possess more in proportion than any other of the mountain tribes within the buffalo range. Many of the Indian warriors and hunters, encamped around Captain Bonneville, possess from thirty to forty horses each. Their horses are stout, well built ponies, of great wind, and capable of enduring the severest hardship and fatigue. The swiftest of them, however, are those obtained from the whites while sufficiently young to become acclimated and inured to the rough service of the mountains.

By degrees the populousness of this encampment began to produce its inconveniences. The immense droves of horses owned by the Indians consumed the herbage of the surrounding hills; while, to drive them to any distant pasturage, in a neighborhood abounding with lurking and deadly enemies, would be to endanger the loss both of man and beast. Game too, began to grow scarce. It was soon hunted

and frightened out of the vicinity, and though the Indians made a wide circuit through the mountains in the hope of driving the buffalo towards the cantonment, their expedition was unsuccessful. It was plain that so large a party could not subsist themselves there, nor in any one place, throughout the winter. Captain Bonneville, therefore, altered his whole arrangements. He detached fifty men towards the south to winter upon Snake River, and to trap about its waters in the spring, with orders to rejoin him in the month of July, at Horse Creek, in Green River Valley, which he had fixed upon as the general rendezvous of his company for the ensuing year.

Of all his late party, he now retained with him merely a small number of free trappers, with whom he intended to sojourn among the Nez Percés and Flatheads, and adopt the Indian mode of moving with the game and grass. Those bands, in effect, shortly afterwards broke up their encampments and set off for a less beaten neighborhood. Captain Bonneville remained behind for a few days, that he might secretly prepare *caches*, in which to deposit everything not required for current use. Thus lightened of all superfluous incumbrance, he set off on the 20th of November to rejoin his Indian allies. He found them encamped in a

secluded part of the country, at the head of a small stream. Considering themselves out of all danger, in this sequestered spot, from their old enemies, the Blackfeet, their encampment manifested the most negligent security. Their lodges were scattered in every direction, and their horses covered every hill for a great distance round, grazing upon the upland bunch grass, which grew in great abundance, and, though dry, retained its nutritious properties instead of losing them, like other grasses, in the autumn.

When the Nez Percés, Flatheads, and Pends Oreilles are encamped in a dangerous neighborhood, says Captain Bonneville, the greatest care is taken of their horses, those prime articles of Indian wealth, and objects of Indian depredation. Each warrior has his horse tied by one foot at night to a stake planted before his lodge. Here they remain until broad daylight; by that time the young men of the camp are already ranging over the surrounding hills. Each family then drives its horses to some eligible spot, where they are left to graze unattended. A young Indian repairs occasionally to the pasture to give them water, and to see that all is well. So accustomed are the horses to this management, that they keep together in the pasture where they have been left. As the

sun sinks behind the hills, they may be seen moving from all points towards the camp, where they surrender themselves to be tied up for the night. Even in situations of danger, the Indians rarely set guards over their camp at night, intrusting that office entirely to their vigilant and well trained dogs.

In an encampment, however, of such fancied security as that in which Captain Bonneville found his Indian friends, much of these precautions with respect to their horses are omitted. They merely drive them, at nightfall, to some sequestered little dell, and leave them there, at perfect liberty, until the morning.

One object of Captain Bonneville in wintering among these Indians, was to procure a supply of horses against the spring. They were, however, extremely unwilling to part with any, and it was with great difficulty that he purchased, at the rate of twenty dollars each, a few for the use of some of his free trappers, who were on foot, and dependent on him for their equipment.

In this encampment Captain Bonneville remained from the 21st of November to the 9th of December. During this period the thermometer ranged from thirteen to forty-two degrees. There were occasional falls of snow; but it generally melted away almost immedi-

ately, and the tender blades of new grass began to shoot up among the old. On the 7th of December, however, the thermometer fell to seven degrees.

The reader will recollect that, on distributing his forces, when in Green River Valley, Captain Bonneville had detached a party, headed by a leader of the name of Matthieu, with all the weak and disabled horses, to sojourn about Bear River, meet the Shoshonie bands, and afterwards to rejoin him at his winter camp on Salmon River.

More than sufficient time had elapsed, yet Matthieu failed to make his appearance, and uneasiness began to be felt on his account. Captain Bonneville sent out four men to range the country through which he would have to pass, and endeavor to get some information concerning him; for his route lay across the great Snake River plain, which spreads itself out like an Arabian desert, and on which a cavalcade could be descried at a great distance. The scouts soon returned, having proceeded no farther than the edge of the plain, pretending that their horses were lame; but it was evident they had feared to venture, with so small a force, into these exposed and dangerous regions.

A disease, which Captain Bonneville sup-

posed to be pneumonia, now appeared among the Indians, carrying off numbers of them, after an illness of three or four days.

The worthy captain acted as physician, prescribing profuse sweatings and copious bleedings, and uniformly with success, if the patient was subsequently treated with proper care. In extraordinary cases, the poor savages called in the aid of their own doctors or conjurers, who officiated with great noise and mummery, but with little benefit. Those who died during this epidemic, were buried in graves, after the manner of the whites, but without any regard to the direction of the head. It is a fact worthy of notice, that, while this malady made such ravages among the natives, not a single white man had the slightest symptom of it.

A familiar intercourse of some standing with the Pierced-Nosed and Flathead Indians had now convinced Captain Bonneville of their amicable and inoffensive character; he began to take a strong interest in them, and conceived the idea of becoming a pacificator, and healing the deadly feud between them and the Blackfeet, in which they were so deplorably the sufferers. He proposed the matter to some of the leaders, and urged that they should meet the Blackfeet chiefs in a grand pacific conference, offering to send two of his men to the enemy's

camp with pipe, tobacco, and flag of truce, to negotiate the proposed meeting.

The Nez Percés and Flathead sages, upon this, held a council of war, of two days' duration, in which there was abundance of hard smoking and long talking, and both eloquence and tobacco were nearly exhausted. At length they came to a decision to reject the worthy captain's proposition, and upon pretty substantial grounds, as the reader may judge.

"War," said the chiefs, "is a bloody business, and full of evil; but it keeps the eyes of the chiefs always open, and makes the limbs of the young men strong and supple. In war, every one is on the alert. If we see a trail, we know it must be an enemy; if the Blackfeet come to us, we know it is for war, and we are ready. Peace, on the other hand, sounds no alarm; the eyes of the chiefs are closed in sleep, and the young men are sleek and lazy. The horses stray into the mountains; the women and their little babes go about alone. But the heart of a Blackfoot is a lie, and his tongue is a trap. If he says peace, it is to deceive; he comes to us as a brother: he smokes his pipe with us; but when he sees us weak, and off our guard, he will slay and steal. We will have no such peace; let there be war!"

With this reasoning, Captain Bonneville was

fain to acquiesce; but, since the sagacious Flatheads and their allies were content to remain in a state of warfare, he wished them, at least, to exercise the boasted vigilance which war was to produce, and to keep their eyes open. He represented to them the impossibility, that two such considerable clans could move about the country without leaving trails by which they might be traced. Besides, among the Blackfeet braves were several Nez Percés, who had been taken prisoners in early youth, adopted by their captors, and trained up and imbued with warlike and predatory notions; these had lost all sympathies with their native tribe, and would be prone to lead the enemy to their secret haunts. He exhorted them, therefore, to keep upon the alert, and never to remit their vigilance, while within the range of so crafty and cruel a foe. All these counsels were lost upon his easy and simple-minded hearers. A careless indifference reigned throughout their encampments, and their horses were permitted to range the hills at night in perfect freedom. Captain Bonneville had his own horses brought in at night, and properly picketed and guarded. The evil he apprehended soon took place. In a single night, a sweep was made through the neighboring pastures by the Blackfeet, and eighty-six

of the finest horses carried off. A whip and a rope were left in a conspicuous situation by the robbers, as a taunt to the simpletons they had unhorsed.

Long before sunrise, the news of this calamity spread like wildfire through the different encampments. Captain Bonneville, whose own horses remained safe at their pickets, watched in momentary expectation of an outbreak of warriors, Pierced-Nose and Flathead, in furious pursuit of the marauders; but no such thing —they contented themselves with searching diligently over hill and dale, to glean up such horses as had escaped the hands of the marauders, and then resigned themselves to their loss with the most exemplary quiescence.

Some, it is true, who were entirely unhorsed, set out on a begging visit to their cousins, as they call them, the Lower Nez Percés, who inhabit the lower country about the Columbia, and possess horses in abundance. To these they repair when in difficulty, and seldom fail, by dint of begging and bartering, to get themselves once more mounted on horseback.

Game had now become scarce in the neighborhood of the camp, and it was necessary, according to Indian custom, to move off to a less beaten ground. Captain Bonneville proposed the Horse Prairie; but his Indian friends

objected that many of the Nez Percés had gone to visit their cousins, and that the whites were few in number, so that their united force was not sufficient to venture on the buffalo grounds, which were infested by bands of Blackfeet.

They now spoke of a place at no great distance, which they represented as a perfect hunter's elysium. It was on the right branch, or head stream of the river, locked up among cliffs and precipices, where there was no danger from roving bands, and where the Blackfeet dare not enter. Here, they said, the elk abounded, and the mountain sheep were to be seen trooping upon the rocks and hills. A little distance beyond it, also, herds of buffalo were to be met with, out of the range of danger. Thither they proposed to move their camp.

The proposition pleased the captain, who was desirous, through the Indians, of becoming acquainted with all the secret places of the land. Accordingly, on the 9th of December, they struck their tents, and moved forward by short stages, as many of the Indians were yet feeble from the late malady.

Following up the right fork of the river, they came to where it entered a deep gorge of the mountains, up which, lay the secluded region so much vaunted by the Indians. Cap-

tain Bonneville halted, and encamped for three days, before entering the gorge. In the meantime, he detached five of his free trappers to scour the hills and kill as many elk as possible, before the main body should enter, as they would then be soon frightened away by the various Indian hunting parties.

While thus encamped, they were still liable to the marauds of the Blackfeet, and Captain Bonneville admonished his Indian friends to be upon their guard. The Nez Percés, however, notwithstanding their recent loss, were still careless of their horses; merely driving them to some secluded spot, and leaving them there for the night, without setting any guard upon them. The consequence was a second swoop, in which forty-one were carried off. This was borne with equal philosophy with the first, and no effort was made either to recover the horses, or to take vengeance on the thieves.

The Nez Percés, however, grew more cautious with respect to their remaining horses, driving them regularly to the camp every evening, and fastening them to pickets. Captain Bonneville, however, told them that this was not enough. It was evident that they were dogged by a daring and persevering enemy, who was encouraged by past impunity; they should, therefore, take more than usual

precautions, and post a guard at night over their cavalry. They could not, however, be persuaded to depart from their usual custom. The horse once picketed, the care of the owner was over for the night, and he slept profoundly. None waked in the camp but the gamblers, who, absorbed in their play, were more difficult to be roused to external circumstances than even the sleepers.

The Blackfeet are bold enemies, and fond of hazardous exploits. The band that were hovering about the neighborhood, finding they had such pacific people to deal with, redoubled their daring. The horses being now picketed before the lodges, a number of Blackfeet scouts penetrated in the early part of the night into the very centre of the camp. Here they went about among the lodges, as calmly and deliberately as if at home, quietly cutting loose the horses that stood picketed by the lodges of their sleeping owners. One of these prowlers, more adventurous than the rest, approached a fire, round which a group of Nez Percés were gambling with the most intense eagerness. Here he stood for some time, muffled up in his robe, peering over the shoulders of the players watching the changes of their countenances and the fluctuations of the game. So completely engrossed were they, that the presence of this

muffled eavesdropper was unnoticed, and having executed his bravado, he retired undiscovered.

Having cut loose as many horses as they could conveniently carry off, the Blackfeet scouts rejoined their comrades, and all remained patiently round the camp. By degrees, the horses, finding themselves at liberty, took their route towards their customary grazing ground. As they emerged from the camp, they were silently taken possession of, until, having secured about thirty, the Blackfeet sprang on their backs and scampered off. The clatter of hoofs startled the gamblers from their game. They gave the alarm, which soon roused the sleepers from every lodge. Still all was quiescent; no marshalling of forces, no saddling of steed and dashing off in pursuit, no talk of retribution for their repeated outrages. The patience of Captain Bonneville was at length exhausted. He had played the part of a pacificator without success; he now altered his tone, and resolved, if possible, to rouse their war spirit.

Accordingly, convoking their chiefs, he inveighed against their craven policy, and urged the necessity of vigorous and retributive measures, that would check the confidence and presumption of their enemies, if not inspire

them with awe. For this purpose, he advised that a war party should be immediately sent off on the trail of the marauders, to follow them, if necessary, into the very heart of the Blackfoot country, and not to leave them until they had taken signal vengeance. Beside this, he recommended the organization of minor war parties, to make reprisals to the extent of the lossses sustained. "Unless you rouse yourselves from your apathy," said he, "and strike some bold and decisive blow, you will cease to be considered men, or objects of manly warfare. The very squaws and children of the Blackfeet will be sent against you, while their warriors reserve themselves for nobler antagonists."

This harangue had evidently a momentary effect upon the pride of the hearers. After a short pause, however, one of the orators arose. It was bad, he said, to go to war for mere revenge. The Great Spirit had given them a heart for peace, not for war. They had lost horses, it was true, but they could easily get others from their cousins, the Lower Nez Percés, without incurring any risk; whereas, in war they should lose men, who were not so readily replaced. As to their late losses, an increased watchfulness would prevent any more misfortunes of the kind. He disapproved,

therefore, of all hostile measures; and all the other chiefs concurred in his opinion.

Captain Bonneville again took up the point. "It is true," said he, "the Great Spirit has given you a heart to love your friends; but he has also given you an arm to strike your enemies. Unless you do something speedily to put an end to this continual blundering, I must say farewell. As yet, I have sustained no loss; thanks to the precautions which you have slighted: but my property is too unsafe here; my turn will come next; I and my people will share the contempt you are bringing upon yourselves, and will be thought, like you, poor-spirited beings, who may at any time be plundered with impunity."

The conference broke up with some signs of excitement on the part of the Indians. Early the next morning, a party of thirty men set off in pursuit of the foe, and Captain Bonneville hoped to hear a good account of the Blackfeet marauders. To his disappointment, the war party came lagging back on the following day, leading a few old, sorry, broken-down horses, which the freebooters had not been able to urge to sufficient speed. The effort exhausted the martial spirit and satisfied the wounded pride of the Nez Percés, and they relapsed into their usual state of passive indifference.

Chapter XIII.

Story of Kosato, the Renegade Blackfoot.

IF the meekness and long-suffering of the Pierced-Noses grieved the spirit of Captain Bonneville, there was another individual in the camp, to whom they were still more annoying. This was a Blackfoot renegado, named Kosato, a fiery, hot-blooded youth, who, with a beautiful girl of the same tribe, had taken refuge among the Nez Percés. Though adopted into the tribe, he still retained the warlike spirit of his race, and loathed the peaceful, inoffensive habits of those around him. The hunting of the deer, the elk, and the buffalo, which was the height of their ambition, was too tame to satisfy his wild and restless nature. His heart burned for the foray, the ambush, the skirmish, the scamper, and all the haps and hazards of roving and predatory warfare.

The recent hoverings of the Blackfeet about

the camp, and their nightly prowls, and daring and successful marauds, had kept him in a fever and a flutter; like a hawk in a cage, who hears his late companions swooping and screaming in wild liberty above him. The attempt of Captain Bonneville to rouse the war spirit of the Nez Percés, and prompt them to retaliation, was ardently seconded by Kosato. For several days he was incessantly devising schemes of vengeance, and endeavoring to set on foot an expedition that should carry dismay and desolation into the Blackfeet towns. All his art was exerted to touch upon those springs of human action with which he was most familiar. He drew the listening savages round him by his nervous eloquence; taunted them with recitals of past wrongs and insults; drew glowing pictures of triumphs and trophies within their reach; recounted tales of daring and romantic enterprise, of secret marchings, covert lurkings, midnight surprisals, sackings, burnings, plunderings, scalpings; together with the triumphant return, and the feasting and rejoicing of the victors. These wild tales were intermingled with the beating of the drum, the yell, the war-whoop, and the war-dance, so inspiring to Indian valor. All, however, were lost upon the peaceful spirits of his hearers; not a Nez Percé was to be roused

to vengeance, or stimulated to glorious war. In the bitterness of his heart, the Blackfoot renegado repined at the mishap which had severed him from a race of congenial spirits, and driven him to take refuge among beings so destitute of martial fire.

The character and conduct of this man attracted the attention of Captain Bonneville, and he was anxious to hear the reason why he had deserted his tribe, and why he looked back upon them with such deadly hostility. Kosato told him his own story briefly;—it gives a picture of the deep, strong passions that work in the bosoms of these miscalled stoics.

"You see my wife," said he; "she is good; she is beautiful—I love her. Yet, she has been the cause of all my troubles. She was the wife of my chief. I loved her more than he did; and she knew it. We talked together; we laughed together; we were always seeking each other's society; but we were as innocent as children. The chief grew jealous, and commanded her to speak with me no more. His heart became hard towards her; his jealousy grew more furious. He beat her without cause and without mercy; and threatened to kill her outright, if she even looked at me. Do you want traces of his fury? Look

at that scar! His rage against me was no less persecuting. War parties of the Crows were hovering round us; our young men had seen their trail. All hearts were roused for action; my horses were before my lodge. Suddenly the chief came, took them to his own pickets, and called them his own. What could I do?—he was a chief. I durst not speak, but my heart was burning. I joined no longer in the council, the hunt, or the war-feast. What had I to do there? an unhorsed, degraded warrior. I kept by myself, and thought of nothing but these wrongs and outrages.

"I was sitting one evening upon a knoll that overlooked the meadow where the horses were pastured. I saw the horses that were once mine grazing among those of the chief. This maddened me, and I sat brooding for a time over the injuries I had suffered, and the cruelties which she I loved had endured for my sake, until my heart swelled and grew sore, and my teeth were clinched. As I looked down upon the meadow, I saw the chief walking among his horses. I fastened my eyes on him as a hawk's; my blood boiled; I drew my breath hard. He went among the willows. In an instant I was on my feet: my hand was on my knife—I flew rather than ran—before he was aware, I sprang upon him, and with

two blows laid him dead at my feet. I covered his body with earth, and strewed bushes over the place; then hastened to her I loved, told her what I had done, and urged her to fly with me. She only answered me with tears. I reminded her of the wrongs I had suffered, and of the blows and stripes she had endured from the deceased; I had done nothing but an act of justice. I again urged her to fly; but she only wept the more, and bade me go. My heart was heavy, but my eyes were dry. I folded my arms. 'T is well,' said I, 'Kosato will go alone to the desert. None will be with him but the wild beasts of the desert. The seekers of blood may follow on his trail. They may come upon him when he sleeps, and glut their revenge; but you will be safe. Kosato will go alone.'

"I turned away. She sprang after me, and strained me in her arms. 'No,' cried she, 'Kosato shall not go alone! Wherever he goes I will go—he shall never part from me.'

"We hastily took in our hands such things as we most needed, and stealing quietly from the village, mounted the first horses we encountered. Speeding day and night, we soon reached this tribe. They received us with welcome, and we have dwelt with them in peace. They are good and kind: they are

honest; but their hearts are the hearts of women."

Such was the story of Kosato, as related by him to Captain Bonneville. It is of a kind that often occurs in Indian life; where love elopements from tribe to tribe are as frequent as among the novel-read heroes and heroines of sentimental civilization, and often give rise to bloody and lasting feuds.

Chapter XIV.

The Party Enters the Mountain Gorge—A Wild Fastness among the Hills—Mountain Mutton—Peace and Plenty—The Amorous Trapper—A Piebald Wedding—A Free Trapper's Wife—Her Gala Equipments—Christmas in the Wilderness.

ON the 19th of December Captain Bonneville and his confederate Indians raised their camp, and entered the narrow gorge made by the north fork of Salmon River. Up this lay the secure and plenteous hunting region so temptingly described by the Indians.

Since leaving Green River the plains had invariably been of loose sand or coarse gravel, and the rocky formation of the mountains of primitive limestone. The rivers, in general, were skirted with willows and bitter cottonwood trees, and the prairies covered with wormwood. In the hollow breast of the mountains which they were now penetrating, the surrounding heights were clothed with

pine; while the declivities of the lower hills afforded abundance of bunch grass for the horses.

As the Indians had represented, they were now in a natural fastness of the mountains, the ingress and egress of which was by a deep gorge, so narrow, rugged, and difficult, as to prevent secret approach or rapid retreat, and to admit of easy defense. The Blackfeet, therefore, refrained from venturing in after the Nez Percés, awaiting a better chance, when they should once more emerge into the open country.

Captain Bonneville soon found that the Indians had not exaggerated the advantages of this region. Besides numerous gangs of elk, large flocks of the ahsahta or bighorn, the mountain sheep, were to be seen bounding among the precipices. These simple animals were easily circumvented and destroyed. A few hunters may surround a flock and kill as many as they please. Numbers were daily brought into camp, and the flesh of those which were young and fat was extolled as superior to the finest mutton.

Here, then, there was a cessation from toil, from hunger, and alarm. Past ills and dangers were forgotten. The hunt, the game, the song, the story, the rough though good-humored

joke, made time pass joyously away, and plenty and security reigned throughout the camp.

Idleness and ease, it is said, lead to love, and love to matrimony, in civilized life, and the same process takes place in the wilderness. Filled with good cheer and mountain mutton, one of the free trappers began to repine at the solitude of his lodge, and to experience the force of that great law of nature, "It is not meet for man to live alone."

After a night of grave cogitation, he repaired to Kowsoter, the Pierced-Nose chief; and unfolded to him the secret workings of his bosom.

"I want," said he, "a wife. Give me one from among your tribe. Not a young, giddy-pated girl, that will think of nothing but flaunting and finery, but a sober, discreet, hard-working squaw; one that will share my lot without flinching, however hard it may be; that can take care of my lodge and be a companion and a helpmate to me in the wilderness." Kowsoter promised to look around among the females of his tribe, and procure such a one as he desired. Two days were requisite for the search. At the expiration of these, Kowsoter called at his lodge and informed him that he would bring his bride to him in the course of the afternoon. He kept his word. At the appointed time he approached, leading

the bride, a comely copper-colored dame, attired in her Indian finery. Her father, mother, brothers by the half dozen, and cousins by the score, all followed on to grace the ceremony, and greet the new and important relative.

The trapper received his new and numerous family connection with proper solemnity; he placed his bride beside him, and, filling the pipe, the great symbol of peace, with his best tobacco, took two or three whiffs, then handed it to the chief, who transferred it to the father of the bride, from whom it was passed on from hand to hand and mouth to mouth of the whole circle of kinsmen round the fire, all maintaining the most profound and becoming silence.

After several pipes had been filled and emptied in this solemn ceremonial, the chief addressed the bride; detailing at considerable length, the duties of a wife, which, among Indians, are little less onerous than those of the pack-horse; this done, he turned to her friends, and congratulated them upon the great alliance she had made. They showed a due sense of their good fortune, especially when the nuptial presents came to be distributed among the chiefs and relatives, amounting to about one hundred and eighty dollars. The company soon retired, and now the worthy

trapper found, indeed, that he had no green girl to deal with; for the knowing dame at once assumed the style and dignity of a trapper's wife, taking possession of the lodge as her undisputed empire; arranging everything according to her own taste and habitudes; and appearing as much at home, and on as easy terms with the trapper, as if they had been man and wife for years.

We have already given a picture of a free trapper and his horse, as furnished by Captain Bonneville; we shall here subjoin, as a companion picture, his description of a free trapper's wife, that the reader may have a correct idea of the kind of blessing the worthy hunter in question had invoked to solace him in the wilderness.

"The free trapper, while a bachelor, has no greater pet than his horse; but the moment he takes a wife (a sort of brevet rank in matrimony occasionally bestowed upon some Indian fair one, like the heroes of ancient chivalry, in the open field), he discovers that he has a still more fanciful and capricious animal on which to lavish his expenses.

"No sooner does an Indian belle experience this promotion, than all her notions at once rise and expand to the dignity of her situation; and the purse of her lover, and his credit into

the bargain, are tasked to the utmost to fit her out in becoming style. The wife of a free trapper to be equipped and arrayed like any ordinary and undistinguished squaw? Perish the grovelling thought! In the first place, she must have a horse for her own riding; but no jaded, sorry, earth-spirited hack; such as is sometimes assigned by an Indian husband for the transportation of his squaw and her pappooses: the wife of a free trapper must have the most beautiful animal she can lay her eyes on. And then, as to his decoration: headstall, breast-bands, saddle, and crupper are lavishly embroidered with beads, and hung with thimbles, hawks' bells, and bunches of ribands. From each side of the saddle hangs an *esquimoot*, a sort of pocket, in which she bestows the residue of her trinkets and knick-knacks, which cannot be crowded on the decoration of her horse or herself. Over this she folds, with great care, a drapery of scarlet and bright-colored calicoes, and now considers the caparison of her steed complete.

"As to her own person, she is even still more extravagant. Her hair, esteemed beautiful in proportion to its length, is carefully plaited, and made to fall with seeming negligence over either breast. Her riding hat is stuck full of parti-colored feathers; her robe,

fashioned somewhat after that of the whites, is of red, green, and sometimes gray cloth, but always of the finest texture that can be procured. Her leggins and moccasins are of the most beautiful and expensive workmanship, and fitted neatly to the foot and ankle, which with the Indian women are generally well formed and delicate. Then as to jewelry: in the way of finger-rings, ear-rings, necklaces, and other female glories, nothing within reach of the trapper's means is omitted, that can tend to impress the beholder with an idea of the lady's high estate. To finish the whole, she selects from among her blankets of various dyes, one of some glowing color, and throwing it over her shoulders with a native grace, vaults into the saddle of her gay, prancing steed, and is ready to follow her mountaineer 'to the last gasp with love and loyalty.' "

Such is the general picture of the free trapper's wife, given by Captain Bonneville; how far it applied in its details to the one in question does not altogether appear, though it would seem from the outset of her connubial career, that she was ready to avail herself of all the pomp and circumstance of her new condition. It is worthy of mention that, wherever there are several wives of free trappers in a camp, the keenest rivalry exists between

them, to the sore detriment of their husbands' purses. Their whole time is expended, and their ingenuity tasked by endeavors to eclipse each other in dress and decoration. The jealousies and heart-burnings thus occasioned among these, so styled, children of nature are equally intense with those of the rival leaders of style and fashion in the luxurious abodes of civilized life.

The genial festival of Christmas, which throughout all Christendom lights up the fireside of home with mirth and jollity, followed hard upon the wedding just described. Though far from kindred and friends, Captain Bonneville and his handful of free trappers were not disposed to suffer the festival to pass unenjoyed; they were in a region of good cheer, and were disposed to be joyous; so it was determined to "light up the yule clog," and celebrate a merry Christmas in the heart of the wilderness.

On Christmas eve, accordingly, they began their rude *fêtes* and rejoicings. In the course of the night the free trappers surrounded the lodge of the Pierce-Nosed chief, and in lieu of Christmas carols, saluted him with a *feu de joie.*

Kowsoter received it in a truly Christian spirit, and after a speech, in which he ex-

pressed his high gratification at the honor done him, invited the whole company to a feast on the following day. His invitation was gladly accepted. A Christmas dinner in the wigwam of an Indian chief! There was novelty in the idea. Not one failed to be present. The banquet was served up in primitive style: skins of various kinds, nicely dressed for the occasion, were spread upon the ground; upon these were heaped up abundance of venison, elk meat, and mountain mutton; with various bitter roots, which the Indians use as condiments.

After a short prayer, the company all seated themselves cross-legged, in Turkish fashion, to the banquet, which passed off with great hilarity. After which various games of strength and agility, by both white men and Indians, closed the Christmas festivities.

Chapter XV.

A Hunt after Hunters—Hungry Times—A Voracious Repast—Wintry Weather—Godin's River—Splendid Winter Scene on the Great Lava Plain of Snake River—Severe Travelling and Tramping in the Snow—Manœuvres of a Solitary Indian Horseman—Encampment on Snake River—Banneck Indians—The Horse Chief—His Charmed Life.

THE continued absence of Matthieu and his party had, by this time, caused great uneasiness in the mind of Captain Bonneville; and, finding there was no dependence to be placed upon the perseverance and courage of scouting parties, in so perilous a quest, he determined to set out himself on the search, and to keep on until he should ascertain something of the object of his solicitude.

Accordingly, on the 26th December, he left the camp, accompanied by thirteen stark trappers and hunters, all well mounted and armed for dangerous enterprise. On the following morning they passed out at the head of the

mountain gorge, and sallied forth into the open plain. As they confidently expected a brush with the Blackfeet, or some other predatory horde, they moved with great circumspection, and kept vigilant watch in their encampments.

In the course of another day they left the main branch of Salmon River, and proceeded south towards a pass called John Day's Defile. It was severe and arduous travelling. The plains were swept by keen and bitter blasts of wintry wind; the ground was generally covered with snow, game was scarce, so that hunger generally prevailed in the camp, while the want of pasturage soon began to manifest itself in the declining vigor of the horses.

The party had scarcely encamped on the afternoon of the 28th, when two of the hunters who had sallied forth in quest of game came galloping back in great alarm. While hunting they had perceived a party of savages, evidently manœuvring to cut them off from the camp; and nothing had saved them from being entrapped but the speed of their horses.

These tidings struck dismay into the camp. Captain Bonneville endeavored to reassure his men by representing the position of their encampment, and its capability of defense. He

then ordered the horses to be driven in and picketed, and threw up a rough breastwork of fallen trunks of trees, and the vegetable rubbish of the wilderness. Within this barrier was maintained a vigilant watch throughout the night, which passed away without alarm. At early dawn they scrutinized the surrounding plain, to discover whether any enemies had been lurking about during the night; not a foot-print, however, was to be discovered in the coarse gravel with which the plain was covered.

Hunger now began to cause more uneasiness than the apprehensions of surrounding enemies. After marching a few miles they encamped at the foot of a mountain, in hopes of finding buffalo. It was not until the next day that they discovered a pair of fine bulls on the edge of the plain, among rocks and ravines. Having now been two days and a half without a mouthful of food, they took especial care that these animals should not escape them. While some of the surest marksmen advanced cautiously with their rifles into the rough ground, four of the best mounted horsemen took their stations in the plain, to run the bulls down should they only be maimed.

The buffalo were wounded, and set off in

headlong flight. The half-famished horses were too weak to overtake them on the frozen ground, but succeeded in driving them on the ice, where they slipped and fell, and were easily dispatched. The hunters loaded themselves with beef for present and future supply, and then returned and encamped at the last night's fire. Here they passed the remainder of the day, cooking, and eating with a voracity proportioned to previous starvation; forgetting, in the hearty revel of the moment, the certain dangers with which they were environed.

The cravings of hunger being satisfied, they now began to debate about their further progress. The men were much disheartened by the hardships they had already endured. Indeed, two who had been in the rear-guard, taking advantage of their position had deserted and returned to the lodges of the Nez Percés. The prospect ahead was enough to stagger the stoutest heart. They were in the dead of winter. As far as the eye could reach, the wild landscape was wrapped in snow; which was evidently deepening as they advanced. Over this they would have to toil with the icy wind blowing in their faces; their horses might give out through want of pasturage; and they themselves must expect intervals of horrible famine like that they had already experienced.

With Captain Bonneville, however, perseverance was a matter of pride; and having undertaken this enterprise, nothing could turn him back until it was accomplished: though he declares that, had he anticipated the difficulties and sufferings which attended it, he should have flinched from the undertaking

Onward, therefore, the little band urged their way, keeping along the course of a stream called John Day's Creek. The cold was so intense that they had frequently to dismount and travel on foot, lest they should freeze in their saddles. The days, which, at this season, are short enough even in the open prairies, were narrowed to a few hours by the high mountains, which allowed the travellers but a brief enjoyment of the cheering rays of the sun. The snow was, generally, at least twenty inches in depth, and in many places much more: those who dismounted had to beat their way with toilsome steps. Eight miles were considered a good day's journey. The horses were almost famished; for the herbage was covered by the deep snow, so that they had nothing to subsist upon but scanty wisps of the dry bunch grass which peered above the surface, and the small branches and twigs of frozen willows and wormwood.

In this way they urged their slow and pain-

ful course to the south down John Day's Creek, until it lost itself in a swamp. Here they encamped upon the ice among stiffened willows, where they were obliged to beat down and clear away the snow to procure pasturage for their horses.

Hence, they toiled on to Godin River; so called after an Iroquois hunter in the service of Sublette, who was murdered there by the Blackfeet. Many of the features of this remote wilderness are thus named after scenes of violence and bloodshed that occurred to the early pioneers. It was an act of filial vengeance on the part of Godin's son, Antoine, that, as the reader may recollect, brought on the recent battle at Pierre's Hole.

From Godin's River, Captain Bonneville and his followers came out upon the plain of the Three Butes; so called from three singular and isolated hills that rise from the midst. It is a part of the great desert of Snake River, one of the most remarkable tracts beyond the mountains. Could they have experienced a respite from their sufferings and anxieties, the immense landscape spread out before them was calculated to inspire admiration. Winter has its beauties and glories, as well as summer; and Captain Bonneville had the soul to appreciate them.

Indians Crossing a River to a Trading Post.

From an old photograph.

famished horses would soon share his fate, for there seemed scarce blood enough left in their veins to withstand the freezing cold. To beat the way farther through the snow with these enfeebled animals seemed next to impossible; and despondency began to creep over their hearts when, fortunately, they discovered a trail made by some hunting party. Into this they immediately entered, and proceeded with less difficulty. Shortly afterward, a fine buffalo bull came bounding across the snow, and was instantly brought down by the hunters. A fire was soon blazing and crackling, and an ample repast soon cooked, and sooner dispatched, after which they made some further progress and then encamped. One of the men reached the camp nearly frozen to death; but good cheer and a blazing fire gradually restored life, and put his blood in circulation.

Having now a beaten path, they proceeded the next morning with more facility; indeed the snow decreased in depth as they receded from the mountains, and the temperature became more mild. In the course of the day, they discovered a solitary horseman hovering at a distance before them on the plain. They spurred on to overtake him; but he was better mounted on a fresher steed, and kept at a wary distance, reconnoitring them with evident dis-

trust; the wild dress of the free trappers, their leggins, blanket, and cloth caps garnished with fur and topped off with feathers, even their very elf-locks and weather-bronzed complexions, gave them the look of Indians rather than white men, and made him mistake them for a war party of some hostile tribe.

After much manœuvring, the wild horseman was at length brought to a parley; but even then he conducted himself with the caution of a knowing prowler of the prairies. Dismounting from his horse, and using him as a breastwork, he levelled his gun across his back, and, thus prepared for defense like a wary cruiser upon the high seas, he permitted himself to be approached within speaking distance.

He proved to be an Indian of the Banneck tribe, belonging to a band at no great distance. It was some time before he could be persuaded that he was conversing with a party of white men, and induced to lay aside his reserve and join them. He then gave them the interesting intelligence, that there were two companies of white men encamped in the neighborhood. This was cheering news to Captain Bonneville; who hoped to find in one of them the long-sought party of Matthieu. Pushing forward, therefore, with renovated spirits, he reached Snake River by nightfall, and there fixed his encampment.

Early the next morning (13th January, 1833), diligent search was made about the neighborhood for traces of the reported parties of white men. An encampment was soon discovered, about four miles farther up the river; in which Captain Bonneville, to his great joy, found two of Matthieu's men, from whom he learnt that the rest of his party would be there in the course of a few days. It was a matter of great pride and self-congratulation to Captain Bonneville, that he had thus accomplished his dreary and doubtful enterprise; and he determined to pass some time in this encampment, both to wait the return of Matthieu, and to give needful repose to men and horses.

It was, in fact, one of the most eligible and delightful wintering grounds in that whole range of country. The Snake River here wound its devious way between low banks through the great plain of the Three Butes; and was bordered by wide and fertile meadows. It was studded with islands, which, like the alluvial bottoms, were covered with groves of cotton-wood, thickets of willow, tracts of good lowland grass, and abundance of green rushes. The adjacent plains were so vast in extent, that no single band of Indians could drive the buffalo out of them; nor was the snow of sufficient depth to give any serious incon-

venience. Indeed, during the sojourn of Captain Bonneville in this neighborhood, which was in the heart of winter, he found the weather, with the exception of a few cold and stormy days, generally mild and pleasant; freezing a little at night, but invariably thawing with the morning's sun—resembling the spring weather in the middle parts of the United States.

The lofty range of the Three Tetons, those great landmarks of the Rocky Mountains, rising in the east, and circling away to the north and west of the great plain of Snake River; and the mountains of Salt River and Portneuf towards the south, catch the earliest falls of snow. Their white robes lengthen as the winter advances, and spread themselves far into the plain, driving the buffalo in herds to the banks of the river in quest of food; where they are easily slain in great numbers.

Such were the palpable advantages of this winter encampment; added to which, it was secure from the prowlings and plunderings of any petty band of roving Blackfeet; the difficulties of retreat rendering it unwise for those crafty depredators to venture an attack, unless with an overpowering force.

About ten miles below the encampment lay the Banneck Indians; numbering about one

hundred and twenty lodges. They are brave and cunning warriors, and deadly foes of the Blackfeet, whom they easily overcome in battles where their forces are equal. They are not vengeful and enterprising in warfare, however; seldom sending war parties to attack the Blackfeet towns, but contenting themselves with defending their own territories and house. About one third of their warriors are armed with fusees; the rest with bows and arrows.

As soon as the spring opens, they move down the right bank of Snake River, and encamp at the heads of the Boisée and Payette. Here their horses wax fat on good pasturage, while the tribe revels in plenty upon the flesh of deer, elk, bear, and beaver. They then descend a little farther, and are met by the Lower Nez Percés, with whom they trade for horses; giving in exchange beaver, buffalo, and buffalo robes. Hence they strike upon the tributary streams on the left bank of Snake River, and encamp at the rise of the Portneuf and Blackfoot streams, in the buffalo range. Their horses, although of the Nez Percé breed, are inferior to the parent stock, from being ridden at too early an age; being often bought when but two years old, and immediately put to hard work. They have fewer horses, also, than most of these migratory tribes.

At the time that Captain Bonneville came into the neighborhood of these Indians, they were all in mourning for their chief, surnamed The Horse. This chief was said to possess a charmed life, or rather, to be invulnerable to lead; no bullet having ever hit him, though he had been in repeated battles, and often shot at by the surest marksmen. He had shown great magnanimity in his intercourse with the white men. One of the great men of his family had been slain in an attack upon a band of trappers passing through the territories of his tribe. Vengeance had been sworn by the Bannecks; but The Horse interfered, declaring himself the friend of white men, and, having great influence and authority among his people, he compelled them to forego all vindictive plans, and to conduct themselves amicably whenever they came in contact with the traders.

This chief had bravely fallen in resisting an attack made by the Blackfeet upon his tribe, while encamped at the head of the Godin River. His fall in nowise lessened the faith of his people in his charmed life; for they declared that it was not a bullet which laid him low, but a bit of horn which had been shot into him by some Blackfoot marksman; aware no doubt, of the inefficiency of lead. Since his death,

there was no one with sufficient influence over the tribe to restrain the wild and predatory propensities of the young men. The consequence was, they had become troublesome and dangerous neighbors; openly friendly, for the sake of traffic, but disposed to commit secret depredations, and to molest any small party that might fall within their reach.

Chapter XVI.

Misadventures of Matthieu and his Party—Return to the Caches at Salmon River—Battle between Nez Percés and Blackfeet—Heroism of a Nez Percé Woman—Enrolled among the Braves.

ON the 3d of February, Matthieu, with the residue of his band, arrived in camp. He had a disastrous story to relate. After parting with Captain Bonneville in Green River Valley, he had proceeded to the westward, keeping to the north of the Eutaw Mountains, a spur of the great Rocky chain. Here he experienced the most rugged travelling for his horses, and soon discovered that there was but little chance of meeting the Shoshonie bands. He now proceeded along Bear River, a stream much frequented by trappers; intending to shape his course to Salmon River, to rejoin Captain Bonneville.

He was misled, however, either through the ignorance or treachery of an Indian guide, and

conducted into a wild valley, where he lay encamped during the autumn and the early part of the winter, nearly buried in snow, and almost starved. Early in the season he detached five men, with nine horses, to proceed to the neighborhood of Sheep Rock, on Bear River, where game was plenty, and there to procure a supply for the camp. They had not proceeded far on their expedition, when their trail was discovered by a party of nine or ten Indians, who immediately commenced a lurking pursuit, dogging them secretly for five or six days. So long as their encampments were well chosen, and a proper watch maintained, the wary savages kept aloof; at length, observing that they were badly encamped, in a situation where they might be approached with secrecy, the enemy crept stealthily along under cover of the river bank, preparing to burst suddenly upon their prey.

They had not advanced within striking distance, however, before they were discovered by one of the trappers. He immediately, but silently, gave the alarm to his companions. They all sprang upon their horses, and prepared to retreat to a safe position. One of the party, however, named Jennings, doubted the correctness of the alarm, and before he mounted his horse, wanted to ascertain the fact. His

companions urged him to mount, but in vain; he was incredulous and obstinate. A volley of fire-arms by the savages dispelled his doubts, but so overpowered his nerves that he was unable to get into his saddle. His comrades, seeing his peril and confusion, generously leapt from their horses to protect him. A shot from a rifle brought him to the earth; in his agony he called upon the others not to desert him. Two of them, Le Roy and Ross, after fighting desperately, were captured by the savages; the remaining two vaulted into their saddles, and saved themselves by headlong flight, being pursued for nearly thirty miles. They got safe back to Matthieu's camp, where their story inspired such dread of lurking Indians, that the hunters could not be prevailed upon to undertake another foray in quest of provisions. They remained, therefore, almost starving in their camp; now and then killing an old or disabled horse for food, while the elk and the mountain sheep roamed unmolested among the surrounding mountains.

The disastrous surprisal of this hunting party is cited by Captain Bonneville to show the importance of vigilant watching and judicious encampments in the Indian country. Most of this kind of disasters to traders and trappers arise from some careless inattention

to the state of their arms and ammunition, the placing of their horses at night, the position of their camping ground, and the posting of their night watches. The Indian is a vigilant and crafty foe; by no means given to hare-brained assaults; he seldom attacks when he finds his foe well prepared and on the alert. Caution is at least as efficacious a protection against him as courage.

The Indians who made this attack were at first supposed to be Blackfeet; until Captain Bonneville found, subsequently, in the camp of the Bannecks, a horse, saddle, and bridle, which he recognized as having belonged to one of the hunters. The Bannecks, however, stoutly denied having taken these spoils in fight, and persisted in affirming that the outrage had been perpetrated by a Blackfoot band.

Captain Bonneville remained on Snake River nearly three weeks after the arrival of Matthieu and his party. At length his horses having recovered strength sufficient for a journey, he prepared to return to the Nez Percés, or rather to visit his caches on Salmon River; that he might take thence goods and equipments for the opening of the season. Accordingly, leaving sixteen men at Snake River, he set out on the 19th of February, with sixteen others, on his journey to the caches.

Fording the river, he proceeded to the borders of the deep snow, when he encamped under the lee of immense piles of burnt rock. On the 21st he was again floundering through the snow, on the great Snake River plain, where it lay to the depth of thirty inches. It was sufficiently incrusted to bear a pedestrian; but the poor horses broke through the crust, and plunged and strained at every step. So lacerated were they by the ice, that it was necessary to change the front every hundred yards, and put a different one in the advance, to break the way. The open prairies were swept by a piercing and biting wind from the northwest. At night, they had to task their ingenuity to provide shelter and keep from freezing. In the first place, they dug deep holes in the snow, piling it up in ramparts to windward, as a protection against the blast. Beneath these, they spread buffalo skins; upon which they stretched themselves in full dress, with caps, cloaks, and moccasins, and covered themselves with numerous blankets; notwithstanding all which, they were often severely pinched with the cold.

On the 28th of February, they arrived on the banks of Godin River. This stream emerges from the mountains opposite an eastern branch of the Malade River, running southeast, forms

a deep and swift current about twenty yards wide, passing rapidly through a defile to which it gives its name, and then enters the great plain, where, after meandering about forty miles, it is finally lost in the region of the Burnt Rocks.

On the banks of this river, Captain Bonneville was so fortunate as to come upon a buffalo trail. Following it up, he entered the defile, where he remained encamped for two days, to allow the hunters time to kill and dry a supply of buffalo beef. In this sheltered defile, the weather was moderate, and grass was already sprouting more than an inch in height. There was abundance, too, of the salt weed; which grows most plentiful in clayey and gravelly barrens. It resembles pennyroyal, and derives its name from a partial saltness. It is a nourishing food for the horses in the winter, but they reject it the moment the young grass affords sufficient pasturage.

On the 6th of March, having cured sufficient meat, the party resumed their march, and moved on with comparative ease, excepting where they had to make their way through snow-drifts which had been piled up by the wind.

On the 11th, a small cloud of smoke was observed rising in a deep part of the defile.

An encampment was instantly formed, and scouts were sent out to reconnoitre. They returned with intelligence that it was a hunting party of Flatheads, returning from the buffalo range laden with meat. Captain Bonneville joined them the next day, and persuaded them to proceed with his party a few miles below, to the caches, whither he proposed also to invite the Nez Percés, whom he hoped to find somewhere in this neighborhood. In fact, on the 13th, he was rejoined by that friendly tribe, who, since he separated from them on Salmon River, had likewise been out to hunt the buffalo, but had continued to be haunted and harassed by their old enemies the Blackfeet, who, as usual, had contrived to carry off many of their horses.

In the course of this hunting expedition, a small band of ten lodges separated from the main body, in search of better pasturage for their horses. About the 1st of March, the scattered parties of Blackfoot banditti united to the number of three hundred fighting men, and determined upon some signal blow. Proceeding to the former camping ground of the Nez Percés, they found the lodges deserted; upon which, they hid themselves among the willows and thickets, watching for some straggler, who might guide them to the present "whereabout" of their intended victims. As

fortune would have it, Kosato, the Blackfoot renegade, was the first to pass along, accompanied by his blood-bought bride. He was on his way from the main body of hunters to the little band of ten lodges. The Blackfeet knew and marked him as he passed; he was within bow-shot of their ambuscade; yet, much as they thirsted for his blood, they forbore to launch a shaft; sparing him for the moment, that he might lead them to their prey. Secretly following his trail, they discovered the lodges of the unfortunate Nez Percés, and assailed them with shouts and yellings. The Nez Percés numbered only twenty men, and but nine were armed with fusees. They showed themselves, however, as brave and skilful in war as they had been mild and long-suffering in peace. Their first care was to dig holes inside of their lodges; thus ensconced, they fought desperately, laying several of the enemy dead upon the ground; while they, though some of them were wounded, lost not a single warrior.

During the heat of the battle, a woman of the Nez Percés, seeing her warrior badly wounded and unable to fight, seized his bow and arrows, and bravely and successfully defended his person, contributing to the safety of the whole party.

In another part of the field of action, a Nez

At the outset of the fight, Kosato, the renegade, fought with fury rather than valor: animating the others by word as well as deed. A wound in the head from a rifle ball laid him senseless on the earth. There his body remained when the battle was over, and the victors were leading off the horses. His wife hung over him with frantic lamentations. The conquerors paused and urged her to leave the lifeless renegade, and return with them to her kindred. She refused to listen to their solicitations, and they passed on. As she sat watching the features of Kosato, and giving way to passionate grief, she thought she perceived him to breathe. She was not mistaken. The ball, which had been nearly spent before it struck him, had stunned instead of killing him. By the ministry of his faithful wife, he gradually recovered; reviving to a redoubled love for her, and hatred of his tribe.

As to the female who had so bravely defended her husband, she was elevated by the tribe to a rank far above her sex, and, beside other honorable distinctions, was thenceforward permitted to take a part in the war-dances of the braves!

Chapter XVII.

Opening of the Caches—Detachment of Cerré and Hodgkiss—Salmon River Mountains—Superstition of an Indian Trapper—Godin's River—Preparations for Trappings—An Alarm—An Interruption—A Rival Band—Phenomena of Snake River Plain—Vast Clefts and Chasms—Ingulfed Streams—Sublime Scenery—A Grand Buffalo Hunt.

CAPTAIN BONNEVILLE found his caches perfectly secure, and having secretly opened them, he selected such articles as were necessary to equip the free trappers, and to supply the inconsiderable trade with the Indians, after which he closed them again. The free trappers, being newly rigged out and supplied, were in high spirits, and swaggered gayly about the camp. To compensate all hands for past sufferings, and to give a cheerful spur to further operations, Captain Bonneville now gave the men what, in frontier phrase, is termed "a regular blow out." It was a day of uncouth gambols and

frolics, and rude feasting. The Indians joined in the sports and games, and all was mirth and good fellowship.

It was now the middle of March, and Captain Bonneville made preparations to open the spring campaign. He had pitched upon Malade River for his main trapping ground for the season. This is a stream which rises among the great bed of mountains north of the lava plain, and, after a winding course, falls into Snake River. Previous to his departure, the captain dispatched Mr. Cerré, with a few men, to visit the Indian villages and purchase horses; he furnished his clerk, Mr. Hodgkiss, also with a small stock of goods, to keep up a trade with the Indians during the spring, for such peltries as they might collect, appointing the caches on Salmon River as the point of rendezvous, where they were to rejoin him on the 15th of June following.

This done, he set out for Malade River with a band of twenty-eight men, composed of hired and free trappers and Indian hunters, together with eight squaws. Their route lay up along the right fork of Salmon River, as it passes through the deep defile of the mountains. They travelled very slowly, not above five miles a day, for many of the horses were so weak that they faltered and staggered as they

walked. Pasturage, however, was now growing plentiful. There was abundance of fresh grass, which in some places had attained such height as to wave in the wind. The native flocks of the wilderness, the mountain sheep, as they are called by the trappers, were continually to be seen upon the hills between which they passed, and a good supply of mutton was provided by the hunters, as they were advancing towards a region of scarcity.

In the course of his journey, Captain Bonneville had occasion to remark an instance of the many notions, and almost superstitions, which prevail among the Indians, and among some of the white men, with respect to the sagacity of the beaver. The Indian hunters of his party were in the habit of exploring all the streams along which they passed, in search of "beaver lodges," and occasionally set their traps with some success. One of them, however, though an experienced and skilful trapper, was invariably unsuccessful. Astonished and mortified at such unusual bad luck, he at length conceived the idea, that there was some odor about his person, of which the beaver got scent, and retreated at his approach. He immediately set about a thorough purification. Making a rude sweating house on the banks of the river, he would shut himself up until in

a reeking perspiration, and then suddenly emerging, would plunge into the river. A number of these sweatings and plungings having, as he supposed, rendered his person perfectly "inodorous," he resumed his trapping with renovated hope.

About the beginning of April, they encamped upon Godin's River, where they found the swamp full of "muskrat houses." Here, therefore, Captain Bonneville determined to remain a few days and make his first regular attempt at trapping. That his maiden campaign might open with spirit, he promised the Indians and free trappers an extra price for every muskrat they should take. All now set to work for the next day's sport. The utmost animation and gayety prevailed throughout the camp. Everything looked auspicious for their spring campaign. The abundance of muskrats in the swamp was but an earnest of the nobler game they were to find when they should reach the Malade River, and have a capital beaver country all to themselves, where they might trap at their leisure without molestation.

In the midst of their gayety, a hunter came galloping into the camp, shouting, or rather yelling, "A trail! a trail!—lodge poles! lodge poles!"

These were words full of meaning to a trapper's ear. They intimated that there was some band in the neighborhood, and probably a hunting party, as they had lodge poles for an encampment. The hunter came up and told his story. He had discovered a fresh trail, in which the traces made by the dragging of lodge poles were distinctly visible. The buffalo, too, had just been driven out of the neighborhood, which showed that the hunters had already been on the range.

The gayety of the camp was at an end; all preparations for muskrat trapping were suspended, and all hands sallied forth to examine the trail. Their worst fears were soon confirmed. Infallible signs showed the unknown party in the advance to be white men; doubtless, some rival band of trappers! Here was competition when least expected; and that, too, by a party already in the advance, who were driving the game before them. Captain Bonneville had now a taste of the sudden transitions to which a trapper's life is subject. The buoyant confidence in an uninterrupted hunt was at an end; every countenance lowered with gloom and disappointment.

Captain Bonneville immediately dispatched two spies to overtake the rival party, and endeavor to learn their plans; in the meantime,

Captain Bonneville attempted to sound some of these openings, but without any satisfactory result. A stone dropped into one of them reverberated against the sides for apparently a very great depth, and, by its sound, indicated the same kind of substance with the surface, as long as the strokes could be heard. The horse, instinctively sagacious in avoiding danger, shrinks back in alarm from the least of these chasms, pricking up his ears, snorting and pawing, until permitted to turn away.

We have been told by a person well acquainted with the country, that it is sometimes necessary to travel fifty and sixty miles, to get round one of these tremendous ravines. Considerable streams, like that of Godin's River, that run with a bold, free current, lose themselves in this plain; some of them end in swamps, others suddenly disappear, finding, no doubt, subterranean outlets.

Opposite to these chasms, Snake River makes two desperate leaps over precipices, at a short distance from each other; one twenty, the other forty feet in height.

The volcanic plain in question forms an area of about sixty miles in diameter, where nothing meets the eye but a desolate and awful waste; where no grass grows nor water runs, and where nothing is to be seen but lava.

The rival parties now encamped together, not out of companionship, but to keep an eye upon each other. Day after day passed by, without any possibility of getting to the Malade country. Sublette and Jarvie endeavored to force their way across the mountain; but the snows lay so deep as to oblige them to turn back. In the meantime, the captain's horses were daily gaining strength, and their hoofs improving, which had been worn and battered by mountain service. The captain, also, was increasing his stock of provisions, so that the delay was all in his favor.

To any one who merely contemplates a map of the country, this difficulty of getting from Godin to Malade River will appear inexplicable, as the intervening mountains terminate in the great Snake River plain, so that, apparently, it would be perfectly easy to proceed round their bases.

Here, however, occur some of the striking phenomena of this wild and sublime region. The great lower plain which extends to the feet of these mountains is broken up near their bases into crests and ridges, resembling the surges of the ocean breaking on a rocky shore.

In a line with the mountains, the plain is gashed with numerous and dangerous chasms, from four to ten feet wide, and of great depth.

Lieutenant Bonneville attempted to sound some of these openings, but without any satisfactory result. A stone dropped into one of them reverberated against the sides for apparently a very great depth, and, by its sound, indicated the same kind of substance with the surface, as long as the strokes could be heard. The horse, instinctively sagacious in avoiding danger, strikes back in alarm from the least of these chasms, pricking up his ears, snorting and pawing, until permitted to turn away.

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Ranges of mountains skirt this plain, and, in Captain Bonneville's opinion, were formerly connected, until rent asunder by some convulsion of nature. Far to the east, the Three Tetons lift their heads sublimely, and dominate this wide sea of lava ;—one of the most striking features of a wilderness where everything seems on a scale of stern and simple grandeur.

We look forward with impatience for some able geologist to explore this sublime but almost unknown region.

It was not until the 25th of April, that the two parties of trappers broke up their encampments, and undertook to cross over the southwest end of the mountain by a pass explored by their scouts. From various points of the mountain they commanded boundless prospects of the lava plain, stretching away in cold and gloomy barrenness as far as the eye could reach. On the evening of the 26th, they reached the plain west of the mountain, watered by the Malade, the Boisée, and other streams, which comprised the contemplated trapping ground.

The country about the Boisée (or Woody) River, is extolled by Captain Bonneville as the most enchanting he had seen in the Far West ; presenting the mingled grandeur and beauty of mountain and plain ; of bright running

streams and vast grassy meadows waving to the breeze.

We shall not follow the captain throughout his trapping campaign, which lasted until the beginning of June; nor detail all the manœuvres of the rival trapping parties, and their various schemes to outwit and out-trap each other. Suffice it to say, that after having visited and camped about various streams with various success, Captain Bonneville set forward early in June for the appointed rendezvous at the caches. On the way, he treated his party to a grand buffalo hunt. The scouts had reported numerous herds in a plain beyond an intervening height. There was an immediate halt; the fleetest horses were forthwith mounted, and the party advanced to the summit of the hill. Hence they beheld the great plain below absolutely swarming with buffalo. Captain Bonneville now appointed the place where he would encamp; and towards which the hunters were to drive the game. He cautioned the latter to advance slowly, reserving the strength and speed of the horses, until within a moderate distance of the herds. Twenty-two horsemen descended cautiously into the plain, conformably to these directions. "It was a beautiful sight," says the captain, "to see the runners, as they are called, advan-

cing in column, at a slow trot, until within two hundred and fifty yards of the outskirts of the herd, then dashing on at full speed, until lost in the immense multitude of buffaloes scouring the plain in every direction." All was now tumult and wild confusion. In the meantime, Captain Bonneville and the residue of the party moved on to the appointed camping ground; thither the most expert runners succeeded in driving numbers of buffalo, which were killed hard by the camp, and the flesh transported thither without difficulty. In a little while the whole camp looked like one great slaughter-house; the carcasses were skilfully cut up, great fires were made, scaffolds erected for drying and jerking beef, and an ample provision was made for future subsistence. On the 15th of June, the precise day appointed for the rendezvous, Captain Bonneville and his party arrived safely at the caches,

Here he was joined by the other detachments of his main party, all in good health and spirits. The caches were again opened, supplies of various kinds taken out, and a liberal allowance of *aqua vitæ* distributed throughout the camp, to celebrate with proper conviviality this merry meeting.

Chapter XVIII.

Meeting with Hodgkiss—Misfortunes of the Nez Percés—Schemes of Kosato, the Renegado—His Foray into the Horse Prairie—Invasion of Blackfeet—Blue John, and his Forlorn Hope—Their Generous Enterprise—Their Fate—Consternation and Despair of the Village—Solemn Obsequies—Attempt at Indian Trade—Hudson's Bay Company's Monoply—Arrangements for Autumn—Breaking up of an Encampment.

HAVING now a pretty strong party, well armed and equipped, Captain Bonneville no longer felt the necessity of fortifying himself in the secret places and fastnesses of the mountains; but sallied forth boldly into the Snake River plain, in search of his clerk, Hodgkiss, who had remained with the Nez Percés. He found him on the 24th of June, and learnt from him another chapter of misfortunes which had recently befallen that ill-fated race.

After the departure of Captain Bonneville, in

March, Kosato, the renegade Blackfoot, had recovered from the wound received in battle; and with his strength revived all his deadly hostility to his native tribe. He now resumed his efforts to stir up the Nez Percés to reprisals upon their old enemies; reminding them incessantly of all the outrages and robberies they had recently experienced, and assuring them that such would continue to be their lot, until they proved themselves men by some signal retaliation.

The impassioned eloquence of the desperado at length produced an effect; and a band of braves enlisted under his guidance, to penetrate into the Blackfoot country, harass their villages, carry off their horses, and commit all kinds of depredations.

Kosato pushed forward on his foray, as far as the Horse Prairie; where he came upon a strong party of Blackfeet. Without waiting to estimate their force, he attacked them with characteristic fury, and was bravely seconded by his followers. The contest, for a time, was hot and bloody: at length, as is customary with these two tribes, they paused, and held a long parley, or rather a war of words.

"What need," said the Blackfoot chief, tauntingly, "have the Nez Percés to leave their homes, and sally forth on war parties,

when they have danger enough at their own doors? If you want fighting, return to your villages; you will have plenty of it there. The Blackfeet warriors have hitherto made war upon you as children. They are now coming as men. A great force is at hand; they are on their way to your towns, and are determined to rub out the very name of the Nez Percés from the mountains. Return, I say, to your towns, and fight there, if you wish to live any longer as a people."

Kosato took him at his word; for he knew the character of his native tribe. Hastening back with his band to the Nez Percé village, he told all that he had seen and heard; and urged the most prompt and strenuous measures for defense. The Nez Percés, however, heard him with their accustomed phlegm: the threat of the Blackfeet had been often made, and as often had proved a mere bravado; such they pronounced it to be at present, and, of course, took no precaution.

They were soon convinced that it was no empty menace. In a few days, a band of three hundred Blackfeet warriors appeared upon the hills. All now was consternation in the village. The force of the Nez Percés was too small to cope with the enemy in open fight; many of the young men having gone to their

relatives on the Columbia to procure horses. The sages met in hurried council. What was to be done to ward off a blow which threatened annihilation? In this moment of imminent peril, a Pierced-Nose chief, named Blue John by the whites, offered to approach secretly with a small but chosen band, through a defile which led to the encampment of the enemy, and, by a sudden onset, to drive off the horses. Should this blow be successful, the spirit and strength of the invaders would be broken, and the Nez Percés, having horses, would be more than a match for them. Should it fail, the village would not be worse off than at present, when destruction seemed inevitable.

Twenty-nine of the choicest warriors instantly volunteered to follow Blue John in this hazardous enterprise. They prepared for it with the solemnity and devotion peculiar to the tribe. Blue John consulted his medicine, or talismanic charm, such as every chief keeps in his lodge as a supernatural protection. The oracle assured him that his enterprise would be completely successful, provided no rain should fall before he had passed through the defile; but should it rain, his band would be utterly cut off.

The day was clear and bright; and Blue John anticipated that the skies would be propitious.

He departed in high spirits with his forlorn hope; and never did band of braves make a more gallant display—horsemen and horses being decorated and equipped in the fiercest and most glaring style—glittering with arms and ornaments, and fluttering with feathers.

The weather continued serene until they reached the defile; but just as they were entering it, a black cloud rose over the mountain crest, and there was a sudden shower. The warriors turned to their leader as if to read his opinion of this unlucky omen; but the countenance of Blue John remained unchanged, and they continued to press forward. It was their hope to make their way, undiscovered, to the very vicinity of the Blackfoot camp; but they had not procceded far in the defile, when they met a scouting party of the enemy. They attacked and drove them among the hills, and were pursuing them with great eagerness, when they heard shouts and yells behind them, and beheld the main body of the Blackfeet advancing.

The second chief wavered a little at the sight, and proposed an instant retreat. "We came to fight!" replied Blue John, sternly. Then giving his war-whoop, he sprang forward to the conflict. His braves followed him. They made a headlong charge upon the enemy; not with the hope of victory, but the determi-

nation to sell their lives dearly. A frightful carnage rather than a regular battle, succeeded. The forlorn band laid heaps of their enemies dead at their feet, but were overwhelmed with numbers, and pressed into a gorge of the mountain, where they continued to fight until they were cut to pieces. One, only, of the thirty survived. He sprang on the horse of a Blackfoot warrior whom he had slain, and escaping at full speed, brought home the baleful tidings to his village.

Who can paint the horror and desolation of the inhabitants? The flower of their warriors laid low, and a ferocious enemy at their doors. The air was rent by the shrieks and lamentations of the women, who, casting off their ornaments, and tearing their hair, wandered about, frantically bewailing the dead, and predicting destruction to the living. The remaining warriors armed themselves for obstinate defense; but showed, by their gloomy looks and sullen silence, that they considered defense hopeless. To their surprise, the Blackfeet refrained from pursuing their advantage; perhaps satisfied with the blood already shed, or disheartened by the loss they had themselves sustained. At any rate, they disappeared from the hills, and it was soon ascertained that they had returned to the Horse Prairie.

The unfortunate Nez Percés now began once more to breathe. A few of their warriors, taking pack-horses, repaired to the defile to bring away the bodies of their slaughtered brethren. They found them mere headless trunks; and the wounds with which they were covered, showed how bravely they had fought. Their hearts, too, had been torn out and carried off; a proof of their signal valor; for in devouring the heart of a foe renowned for bravery, or who has distinguished himself in battle, the Indian victor thinks he appropriates to himself the courage of the deceased.

Gathering the mangled bodies of the slain, and strapping them across their pack-horses, the warriors returned, in dismal procession, to the village. The tribe came forth to meet them; the women with piercing cries and wailings; the men with downcast countenances, in which gloom and sorrow seemed fixed as if in marble. The mutilated and almost undistinguishable bodies were placed in rows upon the ground, in the midst of the assemblage; and the scene of heart-rending anguish and lamentations that ensued, would have confounded those who insist on Indian stoicism.

Such was the disastrous event that had overwhelmed the Nez Percé tribe, during the absence of Captain Bonneville; and he was

informed that Kosato, the renegade, who, being stationed in the village, had been prevented from going on the forlorn hope, was again striving to rouse the vindictive feelings of his adopted brethren, and to prompt them to revenge the slaughter of their devoted braves.

During his sojourn on the Snake River plain, Captain Bonneville made one of his first essays at the strategy of the fur trade. There was at this time an assemblage of Nez Percés, Flatheads, and Cottonois Indians, encamped together upon the plain; well provided with beaver, which they had collected during the spring. These they were waiting to traffic with a resident trader of the Hudson's Bay Company, who was stationed among them, and with whom they were accustomed to deal. As it happened, the trader was almost entirely destitute of Indian goods; his spring supply not having yet reached him. Captain Bonneville had secret intelligence that supplies were on their way, and would soon arrive; he hoped, however, by a prompt move, to anticipate their arrival, and secure the market to himself. Throwing himself, therefore, among the Indians, he opened his packs of merchandise, and displayed the most tempting wares; bright cloths, and scarlet blankets, and glittering ornaments, and everything gay and glorious

in the eyes of warrior or squaw ; all, however, was in vain. The Hudson's Bay trader was a perfect master of his business, thoroughly acquainted with the Indians he had to deal with, and held such control over them, that none dared to act openly in opposition to his wishes: nay, more—he came nigh turning the tables upon the captain, and shaking the allegiance of some of his free trappers, by distributing liquors among them. The latter, therefore, was glad to give up a competition, where the war was likely to be carried into his own camp.

In fact, the traders of the Hudson's Bay Company have advantages over all competitors in the trade beyond the Rocky Mountains. That huge monopoly centres within itself not merely its own hereditary and long-established power and influence; but also those of its ancient rival, but now integral part, the famous Northwest Company. It has thus its races of traders, trappers, hunters, and *voyageurs*, born and brought up in its service, and inheriting from preceding generations a knowledge and aptitude in everything connected with Indian life, and Indian traffic. In the process of years, this company has been enabled to spread its ramifications in every direction ; its system of intercourse is founded upon a long and inti-

mate knowledge of the character and necessities of the various tribes; and of all the fastnesses, defiles, and favorable hunting grounds of the country. Their capital, also, and the manner in which their supplies are distributed at various posts or forwarded by regular caravans, keep their traders well supplied, and enable them to furnish their goods to the Indians at a cheap rate. Their men, too, being chiefly drawn from the Canadas, where they enjoy great influence and control, are engaged at the most trifling wages, and supported at little cost; the provisions which they take with them being little more than Indian corn and grease. They were brought, also, into the most perfect discipline and subordination, especially when their leaders have once got them to their scene of action in the heart of the wilderness.

These circumstances combine to give the leaders of the Hudson's Bay Company a decided advantage over all the American companies that come within their range; so that any close competition with them is almost hopeless.

Shortly after Captain Bonneville's ineffectual attempt to participate in the trade of the associated camp, the supplies of the Hudson's Bay Company arrived; and the resident trader was enabled to monopolize the market.

It was now the beginning of July; in the latter part of which month, Captain Bonneville had appointed a rendezvous at Horse Creek, in Green River Valley, with some of the parties which he had detached in the preceding year. He now turned his thoughts in that direction, and prepared for the journey.

The Cottonois were anxious for him to proceed at once to their country; which, they assured him, abounded in beaver. The lands of this tribe lie immediately north of those of the Flatheads, and are open to the inroads of the Blackfeet. It is true, the latter professed to be their allies; but they had been guilty of so many acts of perfidy, that the Cottonois had, latterly, renounced their hollow friendship, and attached themselves to the Flatheads and Nez Percés. These they had accompanied in their migrations, rather than remain alone at home, exposed to the outrages of the Blackfeet. They were now apprehensive that these marauders would range their country during their absence, and destroy the beaver; this was their reason for urging Captain Bonneville to make it his autumnal hunting ground. The latter, however, was not to be tempted; his engagements required his presence at the rendezvous in Green River Valley, and he had already formed his ulterior plans.

An unexpected difficulty now arose. The free trappers suddenly made a stand, and declined to accompany him. It was a long and weary journey; the route lay through Pierre's Hole, and other mountain passes infested by the Blackfeet, and recently the scenes of sanguinary conflicts. They were not disposed to undertake such unnecessary toils and dangers, when they had good and secure trapping grounds nearer at hand, on the head-waters of the Salmon River.

As these were free and independent fellows, whose will and whim were apt to be law—who had the whole wilderness before them, "where to choose," and the trader of a rival company at hand, ready to pay for their services—it was necessary to bend to their wishes. Captain Bonneville fitted them out, therefore, for the hunting ground in question, appointing Mr. Hodgkiss to act as their partisan, or leader, and fixing a rendezvous where he should meet them in the course of the ensuing winter. The brigade consisted of twenty-one free trappers, and four or five hired men as camp-keepers. This was not the exact arrangement of a trapping party; which, when accurately organized, is composed of two thirds trappers, whose duty leads them continually abroad in pursuit of game; and one third camp-keepers, who cook,

pack, and unpack; set up the tents, take care of the horses, and do all other duties usually assigned by the Indians to their women. This part of the service is apt to be fulfilled by French creoles from Canada and the valley of the Mississippi.

In the meantime, the associated Indians, having completed their trade and received their supplies, were all ready to disperse in various directions.

As there was a formidable band of Blackfeet just over a mountain to the northeast, by which Hodgkiss and his free trappers would have to pass; and as it was known that those sharp-sighted marauders had their scouts out, watching every movement of the encampments, so as to cut off stragglers or weak detachments, Captain Bonneville prevailed upon the Nez Percés to accompany Hodgkiss and his party, until they should be beyond the range of the enemy.

The Cottonois and the Pends Oreilles determined to move together at the same time, and to pass close under the mountain infested by the Blackfeet; while Captain Bonneville, with his party, was to strike in an opposite direction to the southeast, bending his course for Pierre's Hole, on his way to Green River.

Accordingly, on the 6th of July, all the

camps were raised at the same moment, each party taking its separate route. The scene was wild and picturesque; the long line of traders, trappers, and Indians, with their rugged and fantastic dresses and accoutrements; their varied weapons, their innumerable horses, some under the saddle, some burdened with packages, others following in droves; all stretching in lengthening cavalcades across the vast landscape, and making for different points of the plains and mountains.

Chapter XIX.

Precautions in Dangerous Defiles—Trappers' Mode of Defense on a Prairie—A Mysterious Visitor—Arrival in Green River Valley—Adventures of the Detachments—The Forlorn Partisan—His Tale of Disasters.

AS the route of Captain Bonneville lay through what was considered the most perilous part of this region of dangers, he took all his measures with military skill, and observed the strictest circumspection. When on the march, a small scouting party was thrown in the advance, to reconnoitre the country through which they were to pass. The encampments were selected with great care, and a watch was kept up night and day. The horses were brought in and picketed at night, and at daybreak a party was sent out to scour the neighborhood for half a mile round, beating up every grove and thicket that could give shelter to a lurking foe. When all was reported safe, the horses were cast loose and

turned out to graze. Were such precautions generally observed by traders and hunters, we should not so often hear of parties being surprised by the Indians.

Having stated the military arrangements of the captain, we may here mention a mode of defense on the open prairie, which we have heard from a veteran in the Indian trade. When a party of trappers is on a journey with a convoy of goods or peltries, every man has three pack-horses under his care, each horse laden with three packs. Every man is provided with a picket with an iron head, a mallet, and hobbles, or leathern fetters for the horses. The trappers proceed across the prairie in a long line; or sometimes three parallel lines, sufficiently distant from each other to prevent the packs from interfering. At an alarm, when there is no covert at hand, the line wheels so as to bring the front to the rear, and form a circle. All then dismount, drive their pickets into the ground in the centre, fasten the horses to them, and hobble their forelegs, so that, in case of alarm, they cannot break away. They then unload them, and dispose of their packs as breastworks on the periphery of the circle, each man having nine packs behind which to shelter himself. In this promptly-formed fortress, they await the

assault of the enemy, and are enabled to set large bands of Indians at defiance.

The first night of his march, Captain Bonneville encamped upon Henry's Fork; an upper branch of Snake River, called after the first American trader that erected a fort beyond the mountains. About an hour after all hands had come to a halt the clatter of hoofs was heard, and a solitary female, of the Nez Percé tribe, came galloping up. She was mounted on a mustang, or half-wild horse, which she managed by a long rope hitched round the under jaw by way of bridle. Dismounting, she walked silently into the midst of the camp, and there seated herself on the ground, still holding her horse by the long halter.

The sudden and lonely apparition of this woman, and her calm, yet resolute demeanor, awakened universal curiosity. The hunters and trappers gathered round, and gazed on her as something mysterious. She remained silent, but maintained her air of calmness and self-possession. Captain Bonneville approached and interrogated her as to the object of her mysterious visit. Her answer was brief but earnest—"I love the whites—I will go with them." She was forthwith invited to a lodge, of which she readily took possession, and from that time forward was considered one of the camp.

In consequence, very probably, of the military precautions of Captain Bonneville, he conducted his party in safety through this hazardous region. No accident of a disastrous kind occurred, excepting the loss of a horse, which, in passing along the giddy edge of the precipice, called the Cornice, a dangerous pass between Jackson's and Pierre's Hole, fell over the brink and was dashed to pieces.

On the 13th of July (1883), Captain Bonneville arrived at Green River. As he entered the valley, he beheld it strewn in every direction with the carcasses of buffaloes. It was evident that Indians had recently been there, and in great numbers. Alarmed at this sight, he came to a halt, and soon as it was dark, sent out spies to his place of rendezvous on Horse Creek, where he had expected to meet with his detached parties of trappers on the following day. Early in the morning, the spies made their appearance in the camp, and with them came three trappers of one of his bands, from the rendezvous, who told him his people were all there expecting him. As to the slaughter among the buffaloes, it had been made by a friendly band of Shoshonies, who had fallen in with one of his trapping parties, and accompanied them to the rendezvous. Having imparted this intelligence, the three

worthies from the rendezvous broached a small keg of "alcohol," which they had brought with them, to enliven this merry meeting. The liquor went briskly round; all absent friends were toasted, and the party moved forward to the rendezvous in high spirits.

The meeting of associated bands, who have been separated from each other on these hazardous enterprises, is always interesting; each having its tale of perils and adventures to relate. Such was the case with the various detachments of Captain Bonneville's company, thus brought together on Horse Creek. Here was the detachment of fifty men which he had sent from Salmon River, in the preceding month of November, to winter on Snake River. They had met with many crosses and losses in the course of their spring hunt, not so much from the Indians as from white men. They had come in competition with rival trapping parties, particularly one belonging to the Rocky Mountain Fur Company; and they had long stories to relate of their manœuvres to forestall or distress each other. In fact, in these virulent and sordid competitions, the trappers of each party were more intent upon injuring their rivals, than benefiting themselves; breaking each other's traps, trampling and tearing to pieces the beaver lodges, and doing everything in

their power to mar the success of the hunt. We forbear to detail these pitiful contentions.

The most lamentable tale of disasters, however, that Captain Bonneville had to hear, was from a partisan, whom he had detached in the preceding year, with twenty men, to hunt through the outskirts of the Crow country, and on the tributary streams of the Yellowstone; whence he was to proceed and join him in his winter quarters on Salmon River. This partisan appeared at the rendezvous without his party, and a sorrowful tale of disasters had he to relate. In hunting the Crow country, he fell in with a village of that tribe; notorious rogues, jockeys, and horse stealers, and errant scamperers of the mountains. These decoyed most of his men to desert, and carry off horses, traps, and accoutrements. When he attempted to retake the deserters, the Crow warriors ruffled up to him and declared the deserters were their good friends, had determined to remain among them, and should not be molested. The poor partisan, therefore, was fain to leave his vagabonds among these birds of their own feather, and, being too weak in numbers to attempt the dangerous pass across the mountains to meet Captain Bonneville on Salmon River, he made, with the few that remained faithful to him, for the neighborhood of Tullock's Fort,

on the Yellowstone, under the protection of which he went into winter quarters.

He soon found out that the neighborhood of the fort was nearly as bad as the neighborhood of the Crows. His men were continually stealing away thither, with whatever beaver skins they could secrete or lay their hands on. These they would exchange with the hangers-on of the fort for whisky, and then revel in drunkenness and debauchery.

The unlucky partisan made another move. Associating with his party a few free trappers, whom he met with in this neighborhood, he started off early in the spring to trap on the head-waters of Powder River. In the course of the journey, his horses were so much jaded in traversing a steep mountain, that he was induced to turn them loose to graze during the night. The place was lonely; the path was rugged; there was not the sign of an Indian in the neighborhood; not a blade of grass that had been turned by a footstep. But who can calculate on security in the midst of an Indian country, where the foe lurks in silence and secrecy, and seems to come and go on the wings of the wind? The horses had scarce been turned loose, when a couple of Arickara (or Rickaree) warriors entered the camp. They effected a frank and friendly demeanor; but

their appearance and movements awakened the suspicions of some of the veteran trappers, well versed in Indian wiles. Convinced that they were spies sent on some sinister errand, they took them into custody, and set to work to drive in the horses. It was too late—the horses had already gone. In fact, a war party of Arickaras had been hovering on their trail for several days, watching with the patience and perseverance of Indians, for some moment of negligence and fancied security, to make a successful swoop. The two spies had evidently been sent into the camp to create a diversion, while their confederates carried off the spoil.

The unlucky partisan, thus robbed of his horses, turned furiously on his prisoners, ordered them to be bound hand and foot, and swore to put them to death unless his property were restored. The robbers, who soon found that their spies were in captivity, now made their appearance on horseback, and held a parley. The sight of them, mounted on the very horses they had stolen, set the blood of the mountaineers in a ferment; but it was useless to attack them, as they would have but to turn their steeds and scamper out of the reach of pedestrians. A negotiation was now attempted. The Arickaras offered what they considered fair terms; to barter one horse, or

even two horses, for a prisoner. The mountaineers spurned at their offer, and declared that, unless all the horses were relinquished, the prisoners should be burnt to death. To give force to their threats, a pyre of logs and fagots were heaped up and kindled into a blaze.

The parley continued; the Arickaras released one horse and then another, in earnest of their proposition; finding, however, that nothing short of the relinquishment of all their spoils would purchase the lives of the captives, they abandoned them to their fate, moving off with many parting words and lamentable howlings. The prisoners seeing them depart, and knowing the horrible fate that awaited them, made a desperate effort to escape. They partially succeeded, but were severely wounded and retaken; then dragged to the blazing pyre, and burnt to death in the sight of their retreating comrades.

Such are the savage cruelties that white men learn to practise, who mingle in savage life: and such are the acts that lead to terrible recrimination on the part of the Indians. Should we hear of any atrocities committed by the Arickaras upon captive white men, let this signal and recent provocation be borne in mind. Individual cases of the kind dwell in the recol-

lections of whole tribes; and it is a point of honor and conscience to revenge them.

The loss of his horses completed the ruin of the unlucky partisan. It was out of his power to prosecute his hunting, or to maintain his party; the only thought now was how to get back to civilized life. At the first watercourse, his men built canoes, and committed themselves to the stream. Some engaged themselves at various trading establishments at which they touched, others got back to the settlements. As to the partisan, he found an opportunity to make his way to the rendezvous at Green River Valley; which he reached in time to render to Captain Bonneville this forlorn account of his misadventures.

Chapter XX.

Gathering in Green River Valley—Visitings and Feastings of Leaders—Rough Wassailing among the Trappers—Wild Blades of the Mountains—Indian Belles—Potency of Bright Beads and Red Blankets—Arrival of Supplies—Revelry and Extravagance—Mad Wolves—The Lost Indian.

THE Green River Valley was at this time the scene of one of those general gatherings of traders, trappers, and Indians, that we have already mentioned. The three rival companies, which, for a year past had been endeavoring to out-trade, out-trap, and out-wit each other, were here encamped in close proximity, awaiting their annual supplies. About four miles from the rendezvous of Captain Bonneville was that of the American Fur Company, hard by which, was that also of the Rocky Mountain Fur Company.

After the eager rivalry and almost hostility displayed by these companies in their late cam-

paigns, it might be expected that, when thus brought in juxtaposition, they would hold themselves warily and sternly aloof from each other, and should they happen to come in contact, brawl and bloodshed would ensue.

No such thing! Never did rival lawyers, after a wrangle at the bar, meet with more social good humor at a circuit dinner. The hunting season over, all past tricks and manœuvres are forgotten, all feuds and bickerings buried in oblivion. From the middle of June to the middle of September, all trapping is suspended; for the beavers are then shedding their furs, and their skins are of little value. This, then, is the trapper's holiday, when he is all for fun and frolic, and ready for a saturnalia among the mountains.

At the present season, too, all parties were in good humor. The year had been productive. Competition, by threatening to lessen their profits, had quickened their wits, roused their energies, and made them turn every favorable chance to the best advantage; so that, on assembling at their respective places of rendezvous, each company found itself in possession of a rich stock of peltries.

The leaders of the different companies, therefore, mingled on terms of perfect good fellowship; interchanging visits, and regaling each

other in the best style their respective camps afforded. But the rich treat for the worthy captain was to see the "chivalry" of the various encampments, engaged in contests of skill at running, jumping, wrestling, shooting with the rifle, and running horses. And then their rough hunters' feastings and carousals. They drank together, they sang, they laughed, they whooped; they tried to outbrag and outlie each other in stories of their adventures and achievements. Here the free trappers were in all their glory; they considered themselves the "cocks of the walk," and always carried the highest crests. Now and then familiarity was pushed too far, and would effervesce into a brawl, and a "rough and tumble" fight; but it all ended in cordial reconciliation and maudlin endearment.

The presence of the Shoshonie tribe contributed occasionally to cause temporary jealousies and feuds. The Shoshonie beauties became objects of rivalry among some of the amorous mountaineers. Happy was the trapper who could muster up a red blanket, a string of gay beads, or a paper of precious vermilion, with which to win the smiles of a Shoshonie fair one.

The caravans of supplies arrived at the valley just at this period of gallantry and good fellow-

ship. Now commenced a scene of eager competition and wild prodigality at the different encampments. Bales were hastily ripped open, and their motley contents poured forth. A mania for purchasing spread itself throughout the several bands—munitions for war, for hunting, for gallantry, were seized upon with equal avidity—rifles, hunting knives, traps, scarlet cloth, red blankets, gairish beads, and glittering trinkets, were bought at any price, and scores run up without any thought how they were ever to be rubbed off. The free trappers, especially, were extravagant in their purchases. For a free mountaineer to pause at a paltry consideration of dollars and cents, in the attainment of any object that might strike his fancy, would stamp him with the mark of the beast in the estimation of his comrades. For a trader to refuse one of these free and flourishing blades a credit, whatever unpaid scores might stare him in the face, would be a flagrant affront scarcely to be forgiven.

Now succeeded another outbreak of revelry and extravagance. The trappers were newly fitted out and arrayed, and dashed about with their horses caparisoned in Indian style. The Shoshonie beauties also flaunted about in all the colors of the rainbow. Every freak of

prodigality was indulged to its full extent, and in a little while most of the trappers, having squandered away all their wages, and perhaps run knee-deep in debt, were ready for another hard campaign in the wilderness.

During this season of folly and frolic, there was an alarm of mad wolves in the two lower camps. One or more of these animals entered the camps three nights successively, and bit several of the people.

Captain Bonneville relates the case of an Indian, who was a universal favorite in the lower camp. He had been bitten by one of these animals. Being out with a party shortly afterwards, he grew silent and gloomy, and lagged behind the rest as if he wished to leave them. They halted and urged him to move faster, but he entreated them not to approach him, and, leaping from his horse, began to roll frantically on the earth, gnashing his teeth and foaming at the mouth. Still he retained his senses, and warned his companions not to come near him, as he should not be able to restrain himself from biting them. They hurried off to obtain relief; but on their return he was nowhere to be found. His horse and accoutrements remained upon the spot. Three or four days afterwards a solitary Indian, believed to be the same, was observed crossing a

valley, and pursued ; but he darted away into the fastnesses of the mountains, and was seen no more.

Another instance we have from a different person who was present in the encampment. One of the men of the Rocky Mountain Fur Company had been bitten. He set out shortly afterwards, in company with two white men, on his return to the settlements. In the course of a few days he showed symptoms of hydrophobia, and became raving towards night. At length, breaking away from his companions, he rushed into a thicket of willows, where they left him to his fate!

Chapter XXI.

Schemes of Captain Bonneville—The Great Salt Lake —Expedition to Explore it — Preparations for a Journey to the Bighorn.

CAPTAIN BONNEVILLE now found himself at the head of a hardy, well-seasoned and well-appointed company of trappers, all benefited by at least one year's experience among the mountains, and capable of protecting themselves from Indian wiles and stratagems, and of providing for their subsistence wherever game was to be found. He had, also, an excellent troop of horses, in prime condition, and fit for hard service. He determined, therefore, to strike out into some of the bolder parts of his scheme. One of these was to carry his expeditions into some of the unknown tracts of the Far West, beyond what is generally termed the buffalo range. This would have something of the merit and charm of discovery, so dear to every brave and adven-

turous spirit. Another favorite project was to establish a trading post on the lower part of the Columbia River, near the Multnomah Valley, and to endeavor to retrieve for his country some of the lost trade of Astoria.

The first of the above-mentioned views was, at present, uppermost in his mind—the exploring of unknown regions. Among the grand features of the wilderness about which he was roaming, one had made a vivid impression on his mind, and been clothed by his imagination with vague and ideal charms. This is a great lake of salt water, laving the feet of the mountains, but extending far to the west-southwest, into one of those vast and elevated plateaus of land, which range high above the level of the Pacific.

Captain Bonneville gives a striking account of the lake when seen from the land. As you ascend the mountain about its shores, says he, you behold this immense body of water spreading itself before you, and stretching farther and farther, in one wide and far-reaching expanse, until the eye, wearied with continued and strained attention, rests in the blue dimness of distance, upon lofty ranges of mountains, confidently asserted to rise from the bosom of the waters. Nearer to you, the smooth and unruffled surface is studded with little islands,

where the mountain sheep roam in considerable numbers. What extent of lowland may be encompassed by the high peaks beyond, must remain for the present matter of mere conjecture; though from the form of the summits, and the breaks which may be discovered among them, there can be little doubt that they are the sources of streams calculated to water large tracts, which are probably concealed from view by the rotundity of the lake's surface. At some future day, in all probability, the rich harvest of beaver fur which may be reasonably anticipated in such a spot, will tempt adventurers to reduce all this doubtful region to the palpable certainty of a beaten track. At present, however, destitute of the means of making boats, the trapper stands upon the shore, and gazes upon a promised land which his feet are never to tread.

Such is the somewhat fanciful view which Captain Bonneville gives of this great body of water. He has evidently taken part of his ideas concerning it from the representations of others, who have somewhat exaggerated its features. It is reported to be about one hundred and fifty miles long, and fifty miles broad. The ranges of mountain peaks which Captain Bonneville speaks of, as rising from its bosom, are probably the summits of mountains beyond

it, which may be visible at a vast distance, when viewed from an eminence, in the transparent atmosphere of these lofty regions. Several large islands certainly exist in the lake; one of which is said to be mountainous, but not by any means to the extent required to furnish the series of peaks above mentioned.

Captain Sublette, in one of his early expeditions across the mountains, is said to have sent four men in a skin canoe to explore the lake, who professed to have navigated all round it; but to have suffered excessively from thirst, the water of the lake being extremely salt, and there being no fresh streams running into it.

Captain Bonneville doubts this report, or that the men accomplished the circumnavigation, because, he says, the lake receives several large streams from the mountains which bound it to the east. In the spring, when the streams are swollen by rain and by the melting of the snows, the lake rises several feet above its ordinary level; during the summer, it gradually subsides again, leaving a sparkling zone of the finest salt upon its shores.

The elevation of the vast plateau on which this lake is situated, is estimated by Captain Bonneville at one and three fourths of a mile above the level of the ocean. The admirable

purity and transparency of the atmosphere in this region, allowing objects to be seen, and the report of fire-arms to be heard, at an astonishing distance; and its extreme dryness, causing the wheels of wagons to fall in pieces, as instanced in former passages of this work, are proofs of the great altitude of the Rocky Mountain plains. That a body of salt water should exist at such a height, is cited as a singular phenomenon by Captain Bonneville, though the salt lake of Mexico is not much inferior in elevation.*

To have this lake properly explored, and all its secrets revealed, was the grand scheme of the captain for the present year; and while it was one in which his imagination evidently took a leading part, he believed it would be attended with great profit, from the numerous beaver streams with which the lake must be fringed.

This momentous undertaking he confided to his lieutenant, Mr. Walker, in whose experience and ability he had great confidence. He

* The lake of Tezcuco, which surrounds the city of Mexico, the largest and lowest of the five lakes on the Mexican plateau, and one of the most impregnated with saline particles, is seven thousand four hundred and sixty-eight feet, or nearly one mile and a half above the level of the sea.

instructed him to keep along the shores of the lake, and trap in all the streams on his route; also to keep a journal, and minutely to record the events of his journey, and everything curious or interesting, making maps or charts of his route, and of the surrounding country.

No pains nor expense were spared in fitting out the party of forty men, which he was to command. They had complete supplies for a year, and were to meet Captain Bonneville in the ensuing summer, in the valley of Bear River, the largest tributary of the Salt Lake, which was to be his point of general rendezvous.

The next care of Captain Bonneville, was to arrange for the safe transportation of the peltries which he had collected, to the Atlantic States. Mr. Robert Campbell, the partner of Sublette, was at this time in the rendezvous of the Rocky Mountain Fur Company, having brought up their supplies. He was about to set off on his return, with the peltries collected during the year, and intended to proceed through the Crow country, to the head of navigation on the Bighorn River, and to descend in boats down that river, the Missouri, and the Yellowstone, to St. Louis.

Captain Bonneville determined to forward

his peltries by the same route, under the especial care of Mr. Cerré. By way of escort, he would accompany Cerré to the point of embarkation, and then make an autumnal hunt in the Crow country

Chapter XVII.

The Crow Country—A Crow Paradise—Habits of the Crows—Anecdotes of Rose, the Renegade White Man—His Fights with the Blackfeet—His Elevation—His Death—Arapooish, the Crow Chief—His Eagle—Adventure of Robert Campbell—Honor among Crows.

BEFORE we accompany Captain Bonneville into the Crow country, we will impart a few facts about this wild region, and the wild people who inhabit it. We are not aware of the precise boundaries, if there are any, of the country claimed by the Crows; it appears to extend from the Black Hills to the Rocky Mountains, including a part of their lofty ranges, and embracing many of the plains and valleys watered by the Wind River, the Yellowstone, the Powder River, the Little Missouri, and the Nebraska. The country varies in soil and climate; there are vast plains of sand and clay, studded with large red sand-hills; other parts are mountainous

and picturesque; it possesses warm springs, and coal mines, and abounds with game.

But let us give the account of the country, as rendered by Arapooish, a Crow chief, to Mr. Robert Campbell, of the Rocky Mountain Fur Company.

"The Crow country," said he, "is a good country. The Great Spirit has put it exactly in the right place; while you are in it you fare well; whenever you go out of it, whichever way you travel, you fare worse.

"If you go to the south, you have to wander over great barren plains; the water is warm and bad, and you meet the fever and ague.

"To the north it is cold; the winters are long and bitter, with no grass; you cannot keep horses there, but must travel with dogs. What is a country without horses?

"On the Columbia they are poor and dirty, paddle about in canoes, and eat fish. Their teeth are worn out; they are always taking fish-bones out of their mouths. Fish is poor food.

"To the east, they dwell in villages; they live well; but they drink the muddy water of the Missouri—that is bad. A Crow's dog would not drink such water.

"About the forks of the Missouri is a fine country; good water; good grass; plenty of

buffalo. In summer it is almost as good as the Crow country; but in winter it is cold; the grass is gone; and there is no salt weed for the horses.

"The Crow country is exactly in the right place. It has snowy mountains and sunny plains; all kinds of climates, and good things for every season. When the summer heats scorch the prairies, you can draw up under the mountains, where the air is sweet and cool, the grass fresh, and the bright streams come tumbling out of the snow-banks. There you can hunt the elk, the deer, and the antelope, when their skins are fit for dressing; there you will find plenty of white bears and mountain sheep.

"In the autumn, when your horses are fat and strong from the mountain pastures, you can go down into the plains and hunt the buffalo, or trap beaver on the streams. And when winter comes on, you can take shelter in the woody bottoms along the rivers; there you will find buffalo meat for yourselves, and cotton-wood bark for your horses; or you may winter in the Wind River Valley, where there is salt weed in abundance.

"The Crow country is exactly in the right place. Everything good is to be found there. There is no country like the Crow country."

Such is the eulogium on his country by Arapooish.

We have had repeated occasions to speak of the restless and predatory habits of the Crows. They can muster fifteen hundred fighting men; but their incessant wars with the Blackfeet, and their vagabond, predatory habits, are gradually wearing them out.

In a recent work, we related the circumstance of a white man named Rose, an outlaw, and a designing vagabond, who acted as guide and interpreter to Mr. Hunt and his party, on their journey across the mountains to Astoria, who came near betraying them into the hands of the Crows, and who remained among the tribe, marrying one of their women, and adopting their congenial habits.* A few anecdotes of the subsequent fortunes of that renegade may not be uninteresting, especially as they are connected with the fortunes of the tribe.

Rose was powerful in frame and fearless in spirit; and soon by his daring deeds took his rank among the first braves of the tribe. He aspired to command, and knew it was only to be attained by desperate exploits. He distinguished himself in repeated actions with the Blackfeet. On one occasion, a band of those savages had fortified themselves within a

* See *Astoria*.

breastwork, and could not be harmed. Rose proposed to storm the work. "Who will take the lead?" was the demand. "I!" cried he and putting himself at their head, rushed forward. The first Blackfoot that opposed him he shot down with his rifle, and, snatching up the war-club of his victim, killed four others within the fort. The victory was complete, and Rose returned to the Crow village covered with glory, and bearing five Blackfoot scalps, to be erected as a trophy before his lodge. From this time, he was known among the Crows by the name of Che-ku-kaats, or "the man who killed five." He became chief of the village, or rather band, and for a time was the popular idol. His popularity soon awakened envy among the native braves; he was a stranger, an intruder, a white man. A party seceded from his command. Feuds and civil wars succeeded that lasted for two or three years, until Rose, having contrived to set his adopted brethren by the ears, left them, and went down the Missouri in 1823. Here he fell in with one of the earliest trapping expeditions sent by General Ashley across the mountains. It was conducted by Smith, Fitzpatrick, and Sublette. Rose enlisted with them as guide and interpreter. When he got them among the Crows, he was exceedingly generous with their goods;

making presents to the braves of his adopted tribe, as became a high-minded chief.

This, doubtless, helped to revive his popularity. In that expedition, Smith and Fitzpatrick were robbed of their horses in Green River Valley ; the place where the robbery took place still bears the name of Horse Creek. We are not informed whether the horses were stolen through the instigation and management of Rose ; it is not improbable, for such was the perfidy he had intended to practise on a former occasion towards Mr. Hunt and his party.

The last anecdote we have of Rose is from an Indian trader. When General Atkinson made his military expedition up the Missouri, in 1825, to protect the fur trade, he held a conference with the Crow nation, at which Rose figured as Indian dignitary and Crow interpreter. The military were stationed at some little distance from the scene of the "big talk" ; while the general and the chiefs were smoking pipes and making speeches, the officers, supposing all was friendly, left the troops, and drew near the scene of ceremonial. Some of the more knowing Crows, perceiving this, stole quietly to camp, and, unobserved, contrived to stop the touch-holes of the field-pieces with dirt. Shortly after, a misunderstanding occurred in the conference ; some of the Indians,

knowing the cannon to be useless, became insolent. A tumult arose. In the confusion, Colonel O'Fallon snapped a pistol in the face of a brave, and knocked him down with the butt end. The Crows were all in a fury. A chance-medley fight was on the point of taking place, when Rose, his natural sympathies as a white man suddenly recurring, broke the stock of his fusee over the head of a Crow warrior, and laid so vigorously about him with the barrel, that he soon put the whole throng to flight. Luckily, as no lives had been lost, this sturdy rib-roasting calmed the fury of the Crows, and the tumult ended without serious consequences.

What was the ultimate fate of this vagabond hero is not distinctly known. Some report him to have fallen a victim to disease, brought on by his licentious life; others assert that he was murdered in a feud among the Crows. After all, his residence among these savages, and the influence he acquired over them, had, for a time, some beneficial effects. He is said, not merely to have rendered them more formidable to the Blackfeet, but to have opened their eyes to the policy of cultivating the friendship of the white men.

After Rose's death, his policy continued to be cultivated, with indifferent success, by Arapooish, the chief already mentioned, who

had been his great friend, and whose character he had contributed to develop. This sagacious chief endeavored, on every occasion, to restrain the predatory propensities of his tribe when directed against the white men. "If we keep friends with them," said he, "we have nothing to fear from the Blackfeet, and can rule the mountains." Arapooish pretended to be a great "medicine man"; a character among the Indians which is a compound of priest, doctor, prophet, and conjuror. He carried about with him a tame eagle, as his "medicine" or familiar. With the white men, he acknowledged that this was all charlatanism; but said it was necessary, to give him weight and influence among his people.

Mr. Robert Campbell, from whom we have most of these facts, in the course of one of his trapping expeditions, was quartered in the village of Arapooish, and a guest in the lodge of the chieftain. He had collected a large quantity of furs, and, fearful of being plundered, deposited but a part in the lodge of the chief; the rest he buried in a *cache*. One night, Arapooish came into the lodge with a cloudy brow, and seated himself for a time without saying a word. At length, turning to Campbell, "You have more furs with you," said he, "than you have brought into my lodge?"

"I have," replied Campbell.

"Where are they?"

Campbell knew the uselessness of any prevarication with an Indian; and the importance of complete frankness. He described the exact place where he had concealed his peltries.

"'T is well," replied Arapooish; "you speak straight. It is just as you say. But your *cache* has been robbed. Go and see how many skins have been taken from it."

Campbell examined the *cache*, and estimated his loss to be about one hundred and fifty beaver skins.

Arapooish now summoned a meeting of the village. He bitterly reproached his people for robbing a stranger who had confided to their honor; and commanded that whoever had taken the skins, should bring them back; declaring that, as Campbell was his guest and inmate of his lodge, he would not eat nor drink until every skin was restored to him.

The meeting broke up, and every one dispersed. Arapooish now charged Campbell to give neither reward nor thanks to any one who should bring in the beaver skins, but to keep count as they were delivered.

In a little while, the skins began to make their appearance, a few at a time; they were laid down in the lodge, and those who brought

them departed without saying a word. The day passed away. Arapooish sat in one corner of his lodge, wrapped up in his robe, scarcely moving a muscle of his countenance. When night arrived, he demanded if all the skins had been brought in. Above a hundred had been given up, and Campbell expressed himself contented. Not so the Crow chieftain. He fasted all that night, nor tasted a drop of water. In the morning, some more skins were brought in, and continued to come, one and two at a time, throughout the day; until but a few were wanting to make the number complete. Campbell was now anxious to put an end to this fasting of the old chief, and declared that he was perfectly satisfied. Arapooish demanded what number of skins were yet wanting. On being told, he whispered to some of his people, who disappeared. After a time the number were brought in, though it was evident they were not any of the skins that had been stolen, but others gleaned in the village.

"Is all right now?" demanded Arapooish.

"All is right," replied Campbell.

"Good! Now bring me meat and drink!"

When they were alone together, Arapooish had a conversation with his guest.

"When you come another time among the

Crows," said he, "don't hide your goods; trust to them and they will not wrong you. Put your goods in the lodge of a chief, and they are sacred; hide them in a *cache*, and any one who finds them will steal them. My people have now given up your goods for my sake; but there are some foolish young men in the village, who may be disposed to be troublesome. Don't linger, therefore, but pack your horses and be off."

Campbell took his advice, and made his way safely out of the Crow country. He has ever since maintained, that the Crows are not so black as they are painted. "Trust to their honor," says he, "and you are safe; trust to their honesty, and they will steal the hair off of your head."

Having given these few preliminary particulars, we will resume the course of our narrative.

Chapter XXIII.

Departure from Green River Valley—Popo Agie—Its Course—The Rivers into which it Runs—Scenery of the Bluffs—The Great Tar Spring—Volcanic Tracts in the Crow Country—Burning Mountain of Powder River—Sulphur Springs—Hidden Fires—Colter's Hell—Wind River—Campbell's Party—Fitzpatrick and his Trappers—Captain Stewart, an Amateur Traveller—Nathaniel Wyeth—Anecdotes of his Expedition to the Far West—Disaster of Campbell's Party—A Union of Bands—The Bad Pass—The Rapids—Departure of Fitzpatrick—Embarkation of Peltries—Wyeth and his Bull Boat—Adventures of Captain Bonneville in the Bighorn Mountains—Adventures in the Plain—Traces of Indians—Travelling Precautions—Dangers of Making a Smoke—The Rendezvous.

ON the 25th of July, Captain Bonneville struck his tents, and set out on his route for the Bighorn, at the head of a party of fifty six men, including those who were to embark with Cerré. Crossing the Green River Valley, he proceeded along the south point of the Wind River range of mountains, and soon

fell upon the track of Mr. Robert Campbell's party, which had preceded him by a day. This he pursued, until he perceived that it led down the banks of the Sweet Water to the southeast. As this was different from his proposed direction, he left it; and turning to the northeast, soon came upon the waters of the Popo Agie. This stream takes its rise in the Wind River Mountains. Its name, like most Indian names, is characteristic. *Popo*, in the Crow language, signifying head; and *Agie*, river. It is the head of a long river, extending from the south end of the Wind River Mountains in a northeast direction, until it falls into the Yellowstone. Its course is generally through plains, but is twice crossed by chains of mountains; the first called the Littlehorn, the second, the Bighorn. After it has forced its way through the first chain, it is called the Horn River; after the second chain, it is called the Bighorn River. Its passage through this last chain is rough and violent; making repeated falls, and rushing down long and furious rapids, which threatened destruction to the navigator; though a hardy trapper is said to have shot down them in a canoe. At the foot of these rapids, is the head of navigation; where it was the intention of the parties to construct boats, and embark.

Proceeding down along the Popo Agie, Captain Bonneville came again in full view of the "Bluffs," as they are called, extending from the base of the Wind River Mountains far away to the east, and presenting to the eye a confusion of hills and cliffs of red sandstone, some peaked and angular, some round, some broken into crags and precipices, and piled up in fantastic masses; but all naked and sterile. There appeared to be no soil favorable to vegetation, nothing but coarse gravel; yet, over all this isolated, barren landscape, were diffused such atmospherical tints and hues, as to blend the whole into harmony and beauty.

In this neighborhood, the captain made search for the "Great Tar Spring," one of the wonders of the mountains; the medicinal properties of which, he had heard extravagantly lauded by the trappers. After a toilsome search, he found it at the foot of a sand-bluff, a little to the east of the Wind River Mountains; where it exuded in a small stream of the color and consistency of tar. The men immediately hastened to collect a quantity of it to use as an ointment for the galled backs of their horses, and as a balsam for their own pains and aches. From the description given of it, it is evidently the bituminous oil, called petroleum or naphtha, which forms a principal

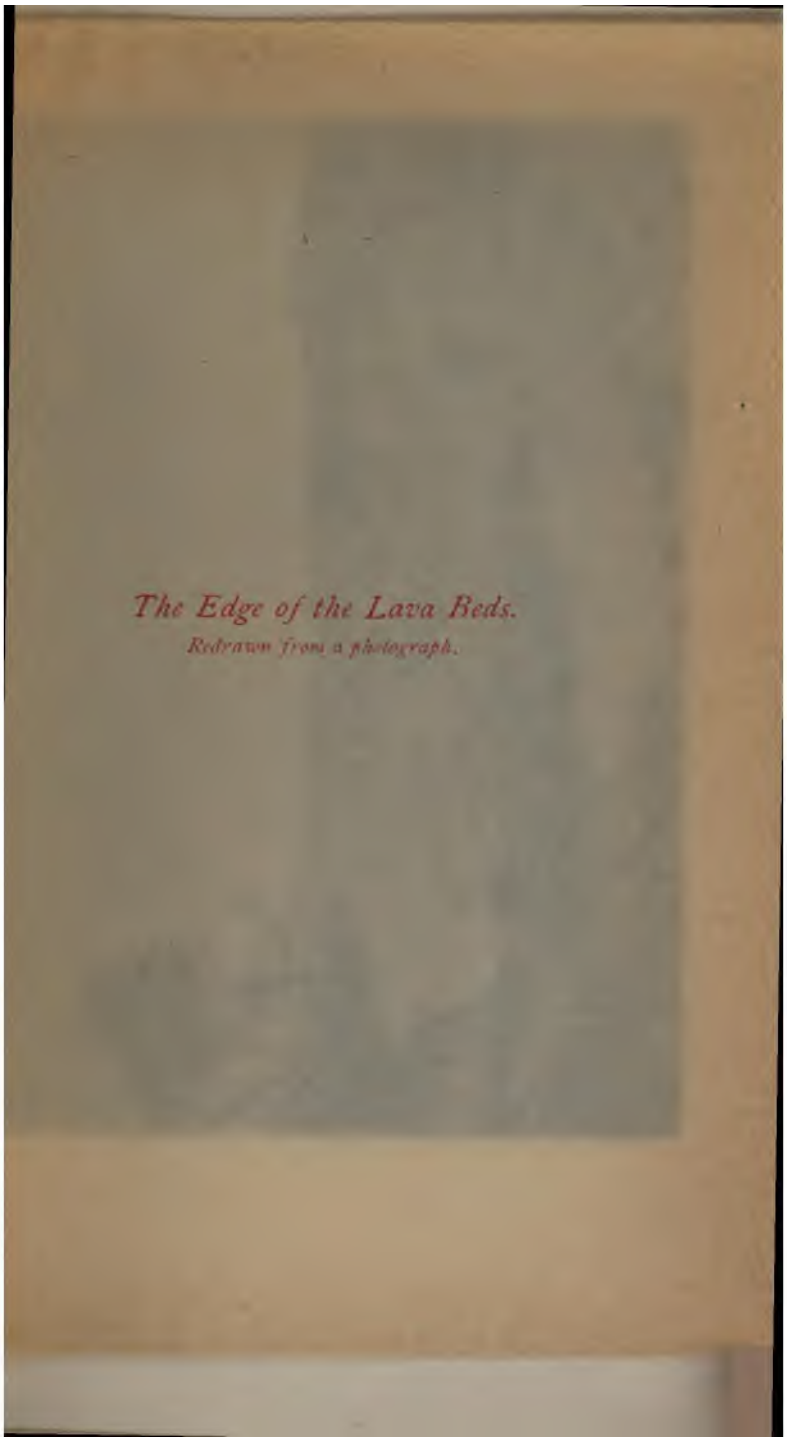
ingredient in the potent medicine called British Oil. It is found in various parts of Europe and Asia, in several of the West India islands, and in some places of the United States. In the State of New York, it is called Seneca Oil, from being found near the Seneca Lake.

The Crow country has other natural curiosities, which are held in superstitious awe by the Indians, and considered great marvels by the trappers. Such is the burning mountain, on Powder River, abounding with anthracite coal. Here the earth is hot and cracked; in many places emitting smoke and sulphurous vapors, as if covering concealed fires. A volcanic tract of similar character is found on Stinking River, one of the tributaries of the Bighorn, which takes its unhappy name from the odor derived from sulphurous springs and streams. This last-mentioned place was first discovered by Colter, a hunter belonging to Lewis and Clarke's exploring party, who came upon it in the course of his lonely wanderings, and gave such an account of its gloomy terrors, its hidden fires, smoking pits, noxious streams, and the all-pervading "smell of brimstone," that it received, and has ever since retained among trappers, the name of "Colter's Hell!"

Resuming his descent along the left bank of the Popo Agie, Captain Bonneville soon reached

the plains; where he found several large streams entering from the west. Among these was Wind River, which gives its name to the mountains among which it takes its rise. This is one of the most important streams of the Crow country. The river being much swollen, Captain Bonneville halted at its mouth, and sent out scouts to look for a fording place. While thus encamped, he beheld in the course of the afternoon, a long line of horsemen descending the slope of the hills on the opposite side of the Popo Agie. His first idea was, that they were Indians; he soon discovered, however, that they were white men, and, by the long line of pack-horses, ascertained them to be the convoy of Campbell, which, having descended the Sweet Water, was now on its way to the Horn River.

The two parties came together two or three days afterwards, on the 4th of August, after having passed through the gap of the Littlehorn Mountain. In company with Campbell's convoy, was a trapping party of the Rocky Mountain Company, headed by Fitzpatrick; who, after Campbell's embarkation on the Bighorn, was to take charge of all the horses, and proceed on a trapping campaign. There were, moreover, two chance companions in the rival camp. One was Captain Stewart of the Brit-



The Edge of the Lava Beds.

Redrawn from a photograph.

traversed the Blue Mountains, trapping beaver occasionally by the way, and finally, after hardships of all kinds, arrived, on the 29th of October, at Vancouver, on the Columbia, the main factory of the Hudson's Bay Company.

He experienced hospitable treatment at the hands of the agents of that company; but his men, heartily tired of wandering in the wilderness, or tempted by other prospects, refused, for the most part, to continue any longer in his service. Some set off for the Sandwich Islands; some entered into other employ. Wyeth found, too, that a great part of the goods he had brought with him were unfitted for the Indian trade; in a word, his expedition, undertaken entirely on his own resources, proved a failure. He lost everything invested in it, but his hopes. These were as strong as ever. He took note of everything, therefore, that could be of service to him in the further prosecution of his project; collected all the information within his reach, and then set off, accompanied by merely two men, on his return journey across the continent. He had got thus far, "by hook and by crook," a mode in which a New England man can make his way all over the world, and through all kinds of difficulties, and was now bound for Boston, in full confidence of being able to form a com-

pany, for the salmon fishery and fur trade of the Columbia.

The party of Mr. Campbell had met with a disaster in the course of their route from the Sweet Water. Three or four of the men, who were reconnoitring the country in the advance of the main body, were visited one night in their camp, by fifteen or twenty Shoshonies. Considering this tribe as perfectly friendly, they received them in the most cordial and confiding manner. In the course of the night, the man on guard near the horses fell sound asleep; upon which a Shoshonie shot him in the head, and nearly killed him. The savages then made off with the horses, leaving the rest of the party to find their way to the main body on foot.

The rival companies of Captain Bonneville and Mr. Campbell, thus fortuitously brought together, now prosecuted their journey in great good fellowship, forming a joint camp of about a hundred men. The captain, however, began to entertain doubts that Fitzpatrick and his trappers, who kept profound silence as to their future movements, intended to hunt the same grounds which he had selected for his autumnal campaign, which lay to the west of the Horn River, on its tributary streams. In the course of his march, therefore, he secretly detached

a small party of trappers, to make their way to those hunting grounds, while he continued on with the main body; appointing a rendezvous, at the next full moon, about the 28th of August, at a place called the Medicine Lodge.

On reaching the second chain, called the Big-horn Mountains, where the river forced its impetuous way through a precipitous defile, with cascades and rapids, the travellers were obliged to leave its banks, and traverse the mountains by a rugged and frightful route, emphatically called the "Bad Pass." Descending the opposite side, they again made for the river banks; and about the middle of August reached the point below the rapids where the river becomes navigable for boats. Here Captain Bonneville detached a second party of trappers, consisting of ten men, to seek and join those whom he had detached while on the route, appointing for them the same rendezvous (at the Medicine Lodge), on the 28th of August.

All hands now set to work to construct "bull boats," as they are technically called; a light, fragile kind of bark, characteristic of the expedients and inventions of the wilderness; being formed of buffalo skins, stretched on frames. They are sometimes, also, called skin boats. Wyeth was the first ready; and, with his usual promptness and hardihood, launched

his frail bark, singly, on this wild and hazardous voyage, down an almost interminable succession of rivers, winding through countries teeming with savage hordes. Milton Sublette, his former fellow-traveller, and his companion in the battle scenes of Pierre's Hole, took passage in his boat. His crew consisted of two white men and two Indians. We shall hear further of Wyeth, and his wild voyage, in the course of our wanderings about the Far West.

The remaining parties soon completed their several armaments. That of Captain Bonneville was composed of three bull boats, in which he embarked all his peltries, giving them in charge of Mr. Cerré, with a party of thirty-six men. Mr. Campbell took command of his own boats, and the little squadrons were soon gliding down the bright current of the Bighorn.

The secret precautions which Captain Bonneville had taken, to throw his men first into the trapping ground west of the Bighorn, were, probably, superfluous. It did not appear that Fitzpatrick had intended to hunt in that direction. The moment Mr. Campbell and his men embarked with the peltries, Fitzpatrick took charge of all the horses, amounting to above a hundred, and struck off to the east, to trap upon Littlehorn, Powder, and Tongue rivers. He was accompanied by Captain Stewart, who

was desirous of having a range about the Crow country. Of the adventures they met with in that region of vagabonds and horse stealers, we shall have something to relate hereafter.

Captain Bonneville being now left to prosecute his trapping campaign without rivalry, set out, on the 17th of August, for the rendezvous at Medicine Lodge. He had but four men remaining with him, and forty-six horses to take care of; with these he had to make his way over mountain and plain, through a marauding, horse-stealing region, full of peril for a numerous cavalcade so slightly manned. He addressed himself to his difficult journey, however, with his usual alacrity of spirit.

In the afternoon of his first day's journey, on drawing near to the Bighorn Mountain, on the summit of which he intended to encamp for the night, he observed, to his disquiet, a cloud of smoke rising from its base. He came to a halt, and watched it anxiously. It was very irregular; sometimes it would almost die away; and then would mount up in heavy volumes. There was, apparently, a large party encamped there; probably, some ruffian horde of Blackfeet. At any rate, it would not do for so small a number of men, with so numerous a cavalcade, to venture within sight of any wandering tribe. Captain Bonneville and his

companions, therefore, avoided this dangerous neighborhood, and, proceeding with extreme caution, reached the summit of the mountain, apparently without being discovered. Here they found a deserted Blackfoot fort, in which they ensconced themselves; disposed of everything as s curely as possible, and passed the night without molestation. Early the next morning they descended the south side of the mountain into the great plain extending between it and the Littlehorn range. Here they soon came upon numerous footprints, and the carcasses of buffaloes; by which they knew there must be Indians not far off. Captain Bonneville now began to feel solicitude about the two small parties of trappers which he had detached; lest the Indians should have come upon them before they had united their forces. But he still felt more solicitude about his own party; for it was hardly to be expected he could traverse these naked plains undiscovered, when Indians were abroad; and should he be discovered, his chance would be a desperate one. Everything now depended upon the greatest circumspection. It was dangerous to discharge a gun, or light a fire, or make the least noise, where such quick-eared and quick-sighted enemies were at hand. In the course of the day they saw indubitable

signs that the buffalo had been roaming there in great numbers, and had recently been frightened away. That night they encamped with the greatest care; and threw up a strong breastwork for their protection.

For the two succeeding days they pressed forward rapidly, but cautiously, across the great plain; fording the tributary streams of the Horn River; encamping one night among thickets; the next, on an island; meeting, repeatedly, with traces of Indians; and now and then, in passing through a defile, experiencing alarms that induced them to cock their rifles.

On the last day of their march hunger got the better of their caution, and they shot a fine buffalo bull at the risk of being betrayed by the report. They did not halt to make a meal, but carried the meat on with them to the place of rendezvous, the Medicine Lodge, where they arrived safely, in the evening, and celebrated their arrival by a hearty supper.

The next morning they erected a strong pen for the horses, and a fortress of logs for themselves; and continued to observe the greatest caution. Their cooking was all done at midday when the fire makes no glare, and a moderate smoke cannot be perceived at any great distance. In the morning and evening,

when the wind is lulled, the smoke rises perpendicularly in a blue column, or floats in light clouds above the tree-tops, and can be discovered from afar.

In this way the little party remained for several days, cautiously encamped, until, on the 29th August, the two detachments they had been expecting, arrived together at the rendezvous. They, as usual, had their several tales of adventures to relate to the captain, which we will furnish to the reader in the next chapter.

Chapter XXIV.

Adventures of the Party of Ten—The Balaamite Mule—A Dead Point—The Mysterious Elks—A Night Attack—A Retreat—Travelling under an Alarm—A Joyful Meeting—Adventures of the Other Party—A Decoy Elk—Retreat to an Island—A Savage Dance of Triumph—Arrival at Wind River.

THE adventures of the detachment of ten are the first in order. These trappers, when they separated from Captain Bonneville at the place where the furs were embarked, proceeded to the foot of the Big-horn Mountain, and having encamped, one of them mounted his mule and went out to set his trap in a neighboring stream. He had not proceeded far when his steed came to a full stop. The trapper kicked and cudgelled, but to every blow and kick the mule snorted and kicked up, but still refused to budge an inch. The rider now cast his eyes warily around in search of some cause for this demur, when, to his dismay, he discovered an Indian fort within

gunshot distance, lowering through the twilight. In a twinkling he wheeled about; his mule now seemed as eager to get on as himself, and in a few moments brought him, clattering with his traps, among his comrades. He was jeered at for his alacrity in retreating; his report was treated as a false alarm; his brother trappers contented themselves with reconnoitring the fort at a distance, and pronounced that it was deserted. As night set in, the usual precaution, enjoined by Captain Bonneville on his men, was observed. The horses were brought in and tied, and a guard stationed over them. This done, the men wrapped themselves in their blankets, stretched themselves before the fire, and being fatigued with a long day's march, and gorged with a hearty supper, were soon in a profound sleep.

The camp fires gradually died away; all was dark and silent; the sentinel stationed to watch the horses had marched as far, and supped as heartily as any of his companions, and while they snored, he began to nod at his post. After a time, a low trampling noise reached his ear. He half opened his eyes, and beheld two or three elks moving about the lodges, picking, and smelling, and grazing here and there. The sight of elk within the purlieus of the camp caused some little sur-

prise; but, having had his supper, he cared not for elk meat, and, suffering them to graze about unmolested, soon relapsed into a doze.

Suddenly, before daybreak, a discharge of fire-arms, and a struggle and tramp of horses, made every one to start to his feet. The first move was to secure the horses. Some were gone; others were struggling, and kicking, and trembling, for there was a horrible uproar of whoops, and yells, and fire-arms. Several trappers stole quietly from the camp, and succeeded in driving in the horses which had broken away; the rest were tethered still more strongly. A breastwork was thrown up of saddles, baggage, and camp furniture, and all hands waited anxiously for daylight. The Indians, in the meantime, collected on a neighboring height, kept up the most horrible clamor, in hopes of striking a panic into the camp, or frightening off the horses. When the day dawned, the trappers attacked them briskly and drove them to some distance. A desultory firing was kept up for an hour, when the Indians, seeing nothing was to be gained, gave up the contest and retired. They proved to be a war party of Blackfeet, who, while in search of the Crow tribe, had fallen upon the trail of Captain Bonneville on the Popo Agie, and dogged him to the Bighorn;

but had been completely baffled by his vigilance. They had then waylaid the present detachment, and were actually housed in perfect silence within their fort, when the mule of the trapper made such a dead point.

The savages went off uttering the wildest denunciations of hostility, mingled with opprobrious terms in broken English, and gesticulations of the most insulting kind.

In this mêlée, one white man was wounded, and two horses were killed. On preparing the morning's meal, however, a number of cups, knives, and other articles were missing, which had, doubtless, been carried off by the fictitious elk, during the slumber of the very sagacious sentinel.

As the Indians had gone off in the direction which the trappers had intended to travel, the latter changed their route, and pushed forward rapidly through the "Bad Pass," nor halted until night; when, supposing themselves out of the reach of the enemy, they contented themselves with tying up their horses and posting a guard. They had scarce laid down to sleep, when a dog strayed into the camp with a small pack of moccasins tied upon his back; for dogs are made to carry burdens among the Indians. The sentinel, more knowing than he of the preceding night, awoke his companion

and reported the circumstance. It was evident that Indians were at hand. All were instantly at work; a strong pen was soon constructed for the horses, after completing which, they resumed their slumbers with the composure of men long inured to danger.

In the next night, the prowling of dogs about the camp, and various suspicious noises, showed that Indians were still hovering about them. Hurrying on by long marches, they at length fell upon a trail, which, with the experienced eye of a veteran woodman, they soon discovered to be that of the party of trappers detached by Captain Bonneville when on his march, and which they were sent to join. They likewise ascertained from various signs, that this party had suffered some maltreatment from the Indians. They now pursued the trail with intense anxiety; it carried them to the banks of the stream called the Gray Bull, and down along its course, until they came to where it empties into the Horn River. Here, to their great joy, they discovered the comrades of whom they were in search, all strongly fortified, and in a state of great watchfulness and anxiety.

We now take up the adventures of this first detachment of trappers. These men, after parting with the main body under Captain Bonneville, had proceeded slowly for several days up

the course of the river, trapping beaver as they went. One morning, as they were about to visit their traps, one of the camp-keepers pointed to a fine elk, grazing at a distance, and requested them to shoot it. Three of the trappers started off for the purpose. In passing the thicket, they were fired upon by some savages in ambush, and at the same time, the pretended elk, throwing off his hide and horn, started forth an Indian warrior.

One of the three trappers, had been brought down by the volley ; the others fled to the camp, and all hands, seizing up whatever they could carry off, retreated to a small island in the river, and took refuge among the willows. Here they were soon joined by their comrade who had fallen, but who had merely been wounded in the neck.

In the meantime, the Indians took possession of the deserted camp, with all the traps, accoutrements, and horses. While they were busy among the spoils, a solitary trapper, who had been absent at his work, came sauntering to the camp with his traps on his back. He had approached near by, when an Indian came forward and motioned him to keep away ; at the same moment, he was perceived by his comrades on the island, and warned of his danger with loud cries. The poor fellow stood for a moment, bewildered and aghast, then drop-

ping his traps, wheeled and made off at full speed, quickened by a sportive volley which the Indians rattled after him.

In high good humor with their easy triumph, the savages now formed a circle round the fire and performed a war dance, with the unlucky trappers for rueful spectators. This done, emboldened by what they considered cowardice on the part of the white men, they neglected their usual mode of bush-fighting, and advanced openly within twenty paces of the willows. A sharp volley from the trappers brought them to a sudden halt, and laid three of them breathless. The chief, who had stationed himself on an eminence to direct all the movements of his people, seeing three of his warriors laid low, ordered the rest to retire. They immediately did so, and the whole band soon disappeared behind a point of woods, carrying off with them the horses, traps, and the greater part of the baggage.

It was just after this misfortune, that the party of ten men discovered this forlorn band of trappers in a fortress, which they had thrown up after their disaster. They were so perfectly dismayed, that they could not be induced even to go in quest of their traps, which they had set in a neighboring stream. The two parties now joined their forces, and made their way, without further misfortune, to the rendezvous.

Captain Bonneville perceived from the reports of these parties, as well as from what he had observed himself in his recent march, that he was in a neighborhood teeming with danger. Two wandering Snake Indians, also, who visited the camp, assured him that there were two large bands of Crows marching rapidly upon him. He broke up his encampment, therefore, on the 1st of September, made his way to the south, across the Littlehorn Mountain, until he reached Wind River, and then turning westward, moved slowly up the banks of that stream, giving time for his men to trap as he proceeded. As it was not in the plan of the present hunting campaign to go near the *caches* on Green River, and as the trappers were in want of traps to replace those they had lost, Captain Bonneville undertook to visit the *caches*, and procure a supply. To accompany him in this hazardous expedition, which would take him through the defiles of the Wind River Mountains, and up the Green River Valley, he took but three men; the main party were to continue on trapping up towards the head of Wind River, near which he was to rejoin them, just about the place where that stream issues from the mountains. We shall accompany the captain on his adventurous errand.

Chapter XXV.

Captain Bonneville Sets Out for Green River Valley—Journey up the Popo Agie—Buffaloes— The Staring White Bears—The Smoke—The Warm Springs—Attempt to Traverse the Wind River Mountains—The Great Slope—Mountain Dells and Chasms—Crystal Lakes—Ascent of a Snowy Peak—Sublime Prospect—A Panorama—"Les Dignes de Pitie," or Wild Men of the Mountains.

HAVING forded Wind River a little above its mouth, Captain Bonneville and his three companions proceeded across a gravelly plain, until they fell upon the Popo Agie, up the left bank of which they held their course, nearly in a southerly direction. Here they came upon numerous droves of buffalo, and halted for the purpose of procuring a supply of beef. As the hunters were stealing cautiously to get within shot of the game, two small white bears suddenly presented themselves in their path, and, rising upon their hind legs, contemplated them for some time, with a

whimsically solemn gaze. The hunters remained motionless; whereupon the bears, having apparently satisfied their curiosity, lowered themselves upon all fours, and began to withdraw. The hunters now advanced, upon which the bears turned, rose again upon their haunches, and repeated their serio-comic examination. This was repeated several times, until the hunters, piqued at their unmannerly staring, rebuked it with a discharge of their rifles. The bears made an awkward bound or two, as if wounded, and then walked off with great gravity, seeming to commune together, and every now and then turning to take another look at the hunters. It was well for the latter that the bears were but half grown, and had not yet acquired the ferocity of their kind.

The buffalo were somewhat startled at the report of the fire-arms; but the hunters succeeded in killing a couple of fine cows, and, having secured the best of the meat, continued forward until some time after dark, when, encamping in a large thicket of willows, they made a great fire, roasted buffalo beef enough for half a score, disposed of the whole of it with keen relish and high glee, and then "turned in" for the night and slept soundly, like weary and well-fed hunters.

At daylight they were in the saddle again,

and skirted along the river, passing through fresh grassy meadows, and a succession of beautiful groves of willows and cotton-wood. Towards evening, Captain Bonneville observed a smoke at a distance rising from among hills, directly in the route he was pursuing. Apprehensive of some hostile band, he concealed the horses in a thicket, and, accompanied by one of his men, crawled cautiously up a height, from which he could overlook the scene of danger. Here, with a spy-glass, he reconnoitred the surrounding country, but not a lodge nor fire, not a man, horse, nor dog was to be discovered; in short, the smoke which had caused such alarm proved to be the vapor from several warm, or rather hot springs of considerable magnitude, pouring forth streams in every direction over a bottom of white clay. One of the springs was about twenty-five yards in diameter, an so deep that the water was of a bright green color.

They were now advancing diagonally upon the chain of Wind River Mountains, which lay between them and Green River Valley. To coast round their southern points would be a wide circuit; whereas, could they force their way through them, they might proceed in a straight line. The mountains were lofty, with snowy peaks and cragged sides; it was hoped,

however, that some practicable defile might be found. They attempted, accordingly, to penetrate the mountains by following up one of the branches of the Popo Agie, but soon found themselves in the midst of stupendous crags and precipices that barred all progress. Retracing their steps, and falling back upon the river, they consulted where to make another attempt. They were too close beneath the mountains to scan them generally, but they now recollected having noticed, from the plain, a beautiful slope, rising, at an angle of about thirty degrees, and apparently without any break, until it reached the snowy region. Seeking this gentle acclivity, they began to ascend it with alacrity, trusting to find at the top one of those elevated plains which prevail among the Rocky Mountains. The slope was covered with coarse gravel, interspersed with plates of freestone. They attained the summit with some toil, but found, instead of a level, or rather undulating plain, that they were on the brink of a deep and precipitous ravine, from the bottom of which rose a second slope, similar to the one they had just ascended. Down into this profound ravine they made their way by a rugged path, or rather fissure of the rocks, and then labored up the second slope. They gained the summit only to find

themselves on another ravine, and now perceived that this vast mountain, which had presented such a sloping and even side to the distant beholder on the plain, was shagged by frightful precipices, and seamed with longitudinal chasms, deep and dangerous.

In one of these wild dells they passed the night, and slept soundly and sweetly after their fatigues. Two days more of arduous climbing and scrambling only served to admit them into the heart of this mountainous and awful solitude, where difficulties increased as they proceeded. Sometimes they scrambled from rock to rock, up the bed of some mountain stream, dashing its bright way down to the plains; sometimes they availed themselves of the paths made by the deer and the mountain sheep, which, however, often took them to the brink of fearful precipices, or led to rugged defiles, impassable for their horses. At one place, they were obliged to slide their horses down the face of a rock, in which attempt some of the poor animals lost their footing, rolled to the bottom, and came near being dashed to pieces.

In the afternoon of the second day, the travellers attained one of the elevated valleys locked up in this singular bed of mountains. Here were two bright and beautiful little lakes, set

like mirrors in the midst of stern and rocky heights, and surrounded by grassy meadows, inexpressibly refreshing to the eye. These probably were among the sources of those mighty streams which take their rise among these mountains, and wander hundreds of miles through the plains.

In the green pastures bordering upon these lakes, the travellers halted to repose, and to give their weary horses time to crop the sweet and tender herbage. They had now ascended to a great height above the level of the plains, yet they beheld huge crags of granite piled one upon another, and beetling like battlements far above them. While two of the men remained in the camp with the horses, Captain Bonneville, accompanied by the other men, set out to climb a neighboring height, hoping to gain a commanding prospect, and discern some practicable route through this stupendous labyrinth. After much toil, he reached the summit of a lofty cliff, but it was only to behold gigantic peaks rising all around, and towering far into the snowy regions of the atmosphere. Selecting one which appeared to be the highest, he crossed a narrow intervening valley, and began to scale it. He soon found that he had undertaken a tremendous task; but the pride of man is never more obstinate than when

climbing mountains. The ascent was so steep and rugged that he and his companions were frequently obliged to clamber on hands and knees, with their guns slung upon their backs. Frequently, exhausted with fatigue, and dripping with perspiration, they threw themselves upon the snow, and took handfuls of it to allay their parching thirst. At one place, they even stripped off their coats and hung them upon the bushes, and thus lightly clad, proceeded to scramble over these eternal snows. As they ascended still higher, there were cool breezes that refreshed and braced them, and springing with new ardor to their task, they at length attained the summit.

Here a scene burst upon the view of Captain Bonneville, that for a time astonished and overwhelmed him with its immensity. He stood, in fact, upon that dividing ridge which Indians regard as the crest of the world; and on each side of which, the landscape may be said to decline to the two cardinal oceans of the globe. Whichever way he turned his eye, it was confounded by the vastness and variety of objects. Beneath him, the Rocky Mountains seemed to open all their secret recesses: deep, solemn valleys; treasured lakes; dreary passes; rugged defiles, and foaming torrents; while beyond their savage precincts, the eye was lost in an

almost immeasurable landscape; stretching on every side into dim and hazy distance, like the expanse of a summer's sea. Whichever way he looked, he beheld vast plains glimmering with reflected sunshine; mighty streams wandering on their shining course toward either ocean, and snowy mountains, chain beyond chain, and peak beyond peak, till they melted like clouds into the horizon. For a time, the Indian fable seemed realized: he had attained that height from which the Blackfoot warrior after death, first catches a view of the land of souls, and beholds the happy hunting grounds spread out below him, brightening with the abodes of the free and generous spirits. The captain stood for a long while gazing upon this scene, lost in a crowd of vague and indefinite ideas and sensations. A long-drawn inspiration at length relieved him from this enthrallment of the mind, and he began to analyze the parts of this vast panorama. A simple enumeration of a few of its features, may give some idea of its collective grandeur and magnificence.

The peak on which the captain had taken his stand, commanded the whole Wind River chain; which, in fact, may rather be considered one immense mountain, broken into snowy peaks and lateral spurs, and seamed

with narrow valleys. Some of these valleys glittered with silver lakes and gushing streams; the fountain head, as it were, of the mighty tributaries to the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans. Beyond the snowy peaks, to the south, and far, far below the mountain range, the gentle river, called the Sweet Water, was seen pursuing its tranquil way through the rugged regions of the Black Hills. In the east, the head-waters of Wind River wandered through a plain, until, mingling in one powerful current, they forced their way through the range of Horn Mountains, and were lost to view. To the north, were caught glimpses of the upper streams of the Yellowstone, that great tributary of the Missouri. In another direction were to be seen some of the sources of the Oregon, or Columbia, flowing to the northwest, past those towering landmarks the three Tetons, and pouring down into the great lava plain; while, almost at the captain's feet, the Green River, or Colorado of the West, set forth on its wandering pilgrimage to the Gulf of California; at first a mere mountain torrent, dashing northward over crag and precipice, in a succession of cascades, and tumbling into the plain, where, expanding into an ample river, it circled away to the south, and after alternately shining out and disappearing in the mazes of the vast landscape, was

finally lost in a horizon of mountains. The day was calm and cloudless, and the atmosphere so pure that objects were discernible at an astonishing distance. The whole of this immense area was inclosed by an outer range of shadowy peaks, some of them faintly marked on the horizon, which seemed to wall it in from the rest of the earth.

It is to be regretted that Captain Bonneville had no instruments with him with which to ascertain the altitude of this peak. He gives it as his opinion, that it is the loftiest point of the North American continent; but of this we have no satisfactory proof. It is certain that the Rocky Mountains are of an altitude vastly superior to what was formerly supposed. We rather incline to the opinion that the highest peak is further to the northward, and is the same measured by Mr. Thompson, surveyor to the Northwest Company; who, by the joint means of the barometer and trigonometric measurement, ascertained it to be twenty-five thousand feet above the level of the sea; an elevation only inferior to that of the Himalayas.*

For a long time, Captain Bonneville remained gazing around him with wonder and enthusi-

* See the letter of Professor Renwick, in the appendix to Astoria.

asm; at length the chill and wintry winds, whirling about the snow-clad height, admonished him to descend. He soon regained the spot where he and his companions had thrown off their coats, which were now gladly resumed, and, retracing their course down the peak, they safely rejoined their companions on the border of the lake.

Notwithstanding the savage and almost inaccessible nature of these mountains, they have their inhabitants. As one of the party was out hunting, he came upon the solitary track of a man, in a lonely valley. Following it up, he reached the brow of a cliff, whence he beheld three savages running across the valley below him. He fired his gun to call their attention, hoping to induce them to turn back. They only fled the faster, and disappeared among the rocks. The hunter returned and reported what he had seen. Captain Bonneville at once concluded that these belonged to a kind of hermit race, scanty in number, that inhabit the highest and most inaccessible fastnesses. They speak the Shoshonie language, and probably are offsets from that tribe, though they have peculiarities of their own, which distinguish them from all other Indians. They are miserably poor; own no horses, and are destitute of every convenience to be de-

rived from an intercourse with the whites. Their weapons are bows and stone-pointed arrows, with which they hunt the deer, the elk, and the mountain sheep. They are to be found scattered about the countries of the Shoshonie, Flathead, Crow, and Blackfeet tribes; but their residences are always in lonely places, and the clefts of the rocks.

Their footsteps are often seen by the trappers in the high and solitary valleys among the mountains, and the smokes of their fires descried among the precipices, but they themselves are rarely met with and still more rarely brought to a parley, so great is their shyness, and their dread of strangers.

As their poverty offers no temptation to the marauder, and as they are inoffensive in their habits, they are never the objects of warfare: should one of them, however, fall into the hands of a war party, he is sure to be made a sacrifice, for the sake of that savage trophy, a scalp, and that barbarous ceremony, a scalp dance. Those forlorn beings, forming a mere link between human nature and the brute, have been looked down upon with pity and contempt by the creole trappers, who have given them the appellation of *les dignes de pitie*, or "the objects of pity." They appear more worthy to be called the wild men of the mountains.

Chapter XXVI.

A Retrograde Move—Channel of a Mountain Torrent—Alpine Scenery—Cascades—Beaver Valleys—Beavers at Work—Their Architecture—Their Modes of Felling Trees—Mode of Trapping Beaver—Contests of Skill—A Beaver "Up to Trap"—Arrival at the Green River Caches.

THE view from the snowy peak of the Wind River Mountain, while it had excited Captain Bonneville's enthusiasm, had satisfied him that it would be useless to force a passage westward, through multiplying barriers of cliffs and precipices. Turning his face eastward, therefore, he endeavored to regain the plains, intending to make the circuit round the southern point of the mountain. To descend, and to extricate himself from the heart of this rock-piled wilderness, was almost as difficult as to penetrate it. Taking his course down the ravine of a tumbling stream, the commencement of some future

river, he descended from rock to rock, and shelf to shelf, between stupendous cliffs and beetling crags, that sprang up to the sky. Often he had to cross and recross the rushing torrent, as it wound foaming and roaring down its broken channel, or was walled by perpendicular precipices; and imminent was the hazard of breaking the legs of the horses in the clefts and fissures of slippery rocks. The whole scenery of this deep ravine was of Alpine wildness and sublimity. Sometimes the travellers passed beneath cascades which pitched from such lofty heights, that the water fell into the stream like heavy rain. In other places, torrents came tumbling from crag to crag, dashing into foam and spray, and making tremendous din and uproar.

On the second day of their descent, the travellers, having got beyond the steepest pitch of the mountains, came to where the deep and rugged ravine began occasionally to expand into small levels or valleys, and the stream to assume for short intervals a more peaceful character. Here, not merely the river itself, but every rivulet flowing into it, was dammed up by communities of industrious beavers, so as to inundate the neighborhood, and make continual swamps.

During a midday halt in one of these beaver

valleys, Captain Bonneville left his companions, and strolled down the course of the stream to reconnoitre. He had not proceeded far, when he came to a beaver pond, and caught a glimpse of one of its painstaking inhabitants busily at work upon the dam. The curiosity of the captain was aroused, to behold the mode of operating of this far-famed architect; he moved forward, therefore, with the utmost caution, parting the branches of the water willows without making any noise, until having attained a position commanding a view of the whole pond, he stretched himself flat on the ground, and watched the solitary workman. In a little while, three others appeared at the head of the dam, bringing sticks and bushes. With these they proceeded directly to the barrier, which Captain Bonneville perceived was in need of repair. Having deposited their loads upon the broken part, they dived into the water, and shortly reappeared at the surface. Each now brought a quantity of mud, with which he would plaster the sticks and bushes just deposited. This kind of masonry was continued for some time, repeated supplies of wood and mud being brought, and treated in the same manner. This done, the industrious beavers indulged in a little recreation, chasing each other about the pond, dodging

and whisking about on the surface, or diving to the bottom; and in their frolic, often slapping their tails on the water with a loud clacking sound. While they were thus amusing themselves, another of the fraternity made his appearance, and looked gravely on their sports for some time, without offering to join in them. He then climbed the bank close to where the captain was concealed, and, rearing himself on his hind-quarters, in a sitting position, put his fore-paws against a young pine-tree, and began to cut the bark with his teeth. At times he would tear off a small piece, and holding it between his paws, and retaining his sedentary position, would feed himself with it, after the fashion of a monkey. The object of the beaver, however, was evidently to cut down the tree; and he was proceeding with his work, when he was alarmed by the approach of Captain Bonneville's men, who, feeling anxious at the protracted absence of their leader, were coming in search of him. At the sound of their voices, all the beavers, busy as well as idle, dived at once beneath the surface, and were no more to be seen. Captain Bonneville regretted this interruption. He had heard much of the sagacity of the beaver in cutting down trees, in which, it is said, they manage to make them fall into the water, and in such

a position and direction as may be most favorable for conveyance to the desired point. In the present instance, the tree was a tall straight pine, and as it grew perpendicularly, and there was not a breath of air stirring, the beaver could have felled it in any direction he pleased, if really capable of exercising a discretion in the matter. He was evidently engaged in "belting" the tree, and his first incision had been on the side nearest to the water.

Captain Bonneville, however, discredits, on the whole, the alleged sagacity of the beaver in this particular, and thinks the animal has no other aim than to get the tree down, without any of the subtle calculation as to its mode or directions of falling. This attribute, he thinks, has been ascribed to them from the circumstance, that most trees growing near water-courses, either lean bodily towards the stream, or stretch their largest limbs in that direction, to benefit by the space, the light, and the air to be found there. The beaver, of course, attacks those trees which are nearest at hand, and on the banks of the stream or pond. He makes incisions round them, or, in technical phrase, belts them with his teeth, and when they fall, they naturally take the direction in which their trunks or branches preponderate.

"I have often," says Captain Bonneville, "seen trees measuring eighteen inches in diameter, at the places where they had been cut through by the beaver, but they lay in all directions, and often very inconveniently for the after purposes of the animal. In fact, so little ingenuity do they at times display in this particular, that at one of our camps on Snake River, a beaver was found with his head wedged into the cut which he had made, the tree having fallen upon him and held him prisoner until he died."

Great choice, according to the captain, is certainly displayed by the beaver in selecting the wood which is to furnish bark for winter provision. The whole beaver household, old and young, set out upon this business, and will often make long journeys before they are suited. Sometimes they cut down trees of the largest size and then cull the branches, the bark of which is most to their taste. These they cut into lengths of about three feet, convey them to the water, and float them to their lodges, where they are stored away for winter. They are studious of cleanliness and comfort in their lodges, and after their repasts, will carry out the sticks from which they have eaten the bark, and throw them into the current beyond the barrier. They are jealous,

too, of their territories, and extremely pugnacious, never permitting a strange beaver to enter their premises, and often fighting with such virulence as almost to tear each other to pieces. In the spring, which is the breeding season, the male leaves the female at home, and sets off on a tour of pleasure, rambling often to a great distance, recreating himself in every clear and quiet expanse of water on his way, and climbing the banks occasionally to feast upon the tender sprouts of the young willows. As summer advances, he gives up his bachelor rambles, and bethinking himself of housekeeping duties, returns home to his mate and his new progeny, and marshals them all for the foraging expedition in quest of winter provisions.

After having shown the public spirit of this praiseworthy little animal as a member of a community, and his amiable and exemplary conduct as the father of a family, we grieve to record the perils with which he is environed, and the snares set for him and his painstaking household.

Practice, says Captain Bonneville, has given such a quickness of eye to the experienced trapper in all that relates to his pursuit, that he can detect the slightest sign of beaver, however wild; and although the lodge may be con-

cealed by close thickets and overhanging willows, he can generally, at a single glance, make an accurate guess at the number of its inmates. He now goes to work to set his trap; planting it upon the shore, in some chosen place, two or three inches below the surface of the water, and secures it by a chain to a pole set deep in the mud. A small twig is then stripped of its bark, and one end is dipped in the "medicine," as the trappers term the peculiar bait which they employ. This end of the stick rises about four inches above the surface of the water, the other end is planted between the jaws of the trap. The beaver, possessing an acute sense of smell, is soon attracted by the odor of the bait. As he raises his nose towards it, his foot is caught in the trap. In his fright he throws a somerset into the deep water. The trap, being fastened to the pole, resists all his efforts to drag it to the shore; the chain by which it is fastened defies his teeth; he struggles for a time, and at length sinks to the bottom and is drowned.

Upon rocky bottoms, where it is not possible to plant the pole, it is thrown into the stream. The beaver, when entrapped, often gets fastened by the chain to sunken logs or floating timber; if he gets to shore, he is en-

tangled in the thickets of brook willows. In such cases, however, it costs the trapper diligent search, and sometimes a bout at swimming, before he finds his game.

Occasionally it happens that several members of a beaver family are trapped in succession. The survivors then become extremely shy, and can scarcely be "brought to medicine," to use the trapper's phrase for "taking the bait." In such case, the trapper gives up the use of the bait, and conceals his traps in the usual paths and crossing-places of the household. The beaver now being completely "up to trap," approaches them cautiously, and springs them ingeniously with a stick. At other times, he turns the traps bottom upwards, by the same means, and occasionally even drags them to the barrier and conceals them in the mud. The trapper, now gives up the contest of ingenuity, and shouldering his traps, marches off, admitting that he is not yet "up to beaver."

On the day following Captain Bonneville's supervision of the industrious and frolicsome community of beavers, of which he has given so edifying an account, he succeeded in extricating himself from the Wind River Mountains, and regaining the plain to the eastward, made a great bend to the south, so as to go

round the bases of the mountains, and arrived without further incident of importance, at the old place of rendezvous in Green River Valley, on the 17th of September.

He found the *caches*, in which he had deposited his superfluous goods and equipments, all safe, and having opened and taken from them the necessary supplies, he closed them again; taking care to obliterate all traces that might betray them to the keen eyes of Indian marauders.

Chapter XXVII.

Route Towards Wind River—Dangerous Neighborhood—Alarms and Precautions—A Sham Encampment—Apparition of an Indian Spy—Midnight Move—A Mountain Defile—The Wind River Valley—Tracking a Party—Deserted Camps—Symptoms of Crows—Meeting of Comrades—A Trapper Entrapped—Crow Pleasantry—Crow Spies—A Decampment—Return to Green River Valley—Meeting with Fitzpatrick's Party—Their Adventures among the Crows—Orthodox Crows.

ON the 18th of September, Captain Bonneville and his three companions set out, bright and early, to rejoin the main party from which they had parted on Wind River. Their route lay up the Green River Valley, with that stream on their right hand, and beyond it, the range of Wind River Mountains. At the head of the valley, they were to pass through a defile which would bring them out beyond the northern end of these mountains,

to the head of Wind River; where they expected to meet the main party, according to arrangement.

We have already adverted to the dangerous nature of this neighborhood, infested by roving bands of Crows and Blackfeet; to whom the numerous defiles and passes of the country afford capital places for ambush and surprise. The travellers, therefore, kept a vigilant eye upon everything that might give intimation of lurking danger.

About two hours after midday, as they reached the summit of a hill, they discovered buffalo on the plain below, running in every direction. One of the men, too, fancied he heard the report of a gun. It was concluded, therefore, that there was some party of Indians below, hunting buffalo.

The horses were immediately concealed in a narrow ravine; and the captain, mounting an eminence, but concealing himself from view, reconnoitred the whole neighborhood with a telescope. Not an Indian was to be seen; so, after halting about an hour, he resumed his journey. Convinced, however, that he was in a dangerous neighborhood, he advanced with the utmost caution; winding his way through hollows and ravines, and avoiding, as much as possible, any open tract, or rising ground, that

might betray his little party to the watchful eye of an Indian scout.

Arriving, at length, at the edge of the open meadow-land bordering on the river, he again observed the buffalo, as far as he could see, scampering in great alarm. Once more concealing the horses, he and his companions remained for a long time watching the various groups of the animals, as each caught the panic and started off; but they sought in vain to discover the cause.

They were now about to enter the mountain defile, at the head of Green River Valley, where they might be waylaid and attacked; they, therefore, arranged the packs on their horses, in the manner most secure and convenient for sudden flight, should such be necessary. This done, they again set forward, keeping the most anxious lookout in every direction.

It was now drawing towards evening; but they could not think of encamping for the night, in a place so full of danger. Captain Bonneville, therefore, determined to halt about sunset, kindle a fire, as if for encampment, to cook and eat supper; but, as soon as it was sufficiently dark, to make a rapid move for the summit of the mountain, and seek some secluded spot for their night's lodgings.

Accordingly, as the sun went down, the little

party came to a halt, made a large fire, spitted their buffalo meat on wooden sticks, and, when sufficiently roasted, planted the savory viands before them; cutting off huge slices with their hunting knives, and supping with a hunter's appetite. The light of their fire would not fail, as they knew, to attract the attention of any Indian horde in the neighborhood; but they trusted to be off and away, before any prowlers could reach the place. While they were supping thus hastily, however, one of their party suddenly started up, and shouted "Indians!" All were instantly on their feet, with their rifles in their hands; but could see no enemy. The man, however, declared that he had seen an Indian advancing, cautiously, along the trail which they had made in coming to the encampment; who, the moment he was perceived, had thrown himself on the ground, and disappeared. He urged Captain Bonneville instantly to decamp. The captain, however, took the matter more coolly. The single fact, that the Indian had endeavored to hide himself, convinced him that he was not one of a party, on the advance to make an attack. He was, probably, some scout, who had followed up their trail, until he came in sight of their fire. He would, in such case, return, and report what he had seen to his companions.

These, supposing the white men had encamped for the night, would keep aloof until very late, when all should be asleep. They would then, according to Indian tactics, make their stealthy approaches, and place themselves in ambush around, preparatory to their attack, at the usual hour of daylight.

Such was Captain Bonneville's conclusion; in consequence of which, he counselled his men to keep perfectly quiet, and act as if free from all alarm, until the proper time arrived for a move. They, accordingly, continued their repast with pretended appetite and jollity; and then trimmed and replenished their fire, as if for a bivouac. As soon, however, as the night had completely set in, they left their fire blazing; walked quietly among the willows, and then leaping into their saddles, made off as noiselessly as possible. In proportion as they left the point of danger behind them, they relaxed in their rigid and anxious taciturnity, and began to joke at the expense of their enemy; whom they pictured to themselves mousing in the neighborhood of their deserted fire, waiting for the proper time of attack, and preparing for a grand disappointment.

About midnight, feeling satisfied that they had gained a secure distance, they posted one of their number to keep watch, in case the

enemy should follow on the trail, and then, turning abruptly into a dense and matted thicket of willows, halted for the night at the foot of the mountain, instead of making for the summit, as they had originally intended.

A trapper in the wilderness, like a sailor on the ocean, snatches morsels of enjoyment in the midst of trouble, and sleeps soundly when surrounded by danger. The little party now made their arrangements for sleep with perfect calmness; they did not venture to make a fire and cook, it is true, though generally done by hunters whenever they come to a halt, and have provisions. They comforted themselves, however, by smoking a tranquil pipe; and then calling in the watch, and turning loose the horses, stretched themselves on their pallets, agreed that whoever should first awake, should rouse the rest, and in a little while were all in as sound sleep as though in the midst of a fortress.

A little before day, they were all on the alert; it was the hour for Indian maraud. A sentinel was immediately detached, to post himself at a little distance on their trail, and give the alarm, should he see or hear an enemy.

With the first blink of dawn, the rest sought the horses; brought them to the camp, and

tied them up, until an hour after sunrise; when, the sentinel having reported that all was well, they sprang once more into their saddles, and pursued the most covert and secret paths up the mountain, avoiding the direct route.

At noon, they halted and made a hasty repast; and then bent their course so as to regain the route from which they had diverged. They were now made sensible of the danger from which they had just escaped. There were tracks of Indians who had evidently been in pursuit of them; but had recently returned, baffled in their search.

Trusting that they had now got a fair start, and could not be overtaken before night, even in case the Indians should renew the chase, they pushed briskly forward, and did not encamp until late; when they cautiously concealed themselves in a secure nook of the mountains.

Without any further alarm, they made their way to the head-waters of Wind River, and reached the neighborhood in which they had appointed the rendezvous with their companions. It was within the precincts of the Crow country; the Wind River Valley being one of the favorite haunts of that restless tribe. After much searching, Captain Bonneville came upon a trail which had evidently been made by his

main party. It was so old, however, that he feared his people might have left the neighborhood; driven off, perhaps, by some of those war parties which were on the prowl. He continued his search with great anxiety, and no little fatigue; for his horses were jaded, and almost crippled, by their forced marches and scramblings through rocky defiles.

On the following day, about noon, Captain Bonneville came upon a deserted camp of his people, from which they had, evidently, turned back; but he could find no signs to indicate why they had done so; whether they had met with misfortune, or molestation, or in what direction they had gone. He was now, more than ever, perplexed.

On the following day, he resumed his march with increasing anxiety. The feet of his horses had by this time become so worn and wounded by the rocks, that he had to make moccasins for them of buffalo hide. About noon, he came to another deserted camp of his men; but soon after lost their trail. After great search, he once more found it, turning in a southerly direction along the eastern basis of the Wind River Mountains, which towered to the right. He now pushed forward with all possible speed, in hopes of overtaking the party. At night, he slept at another of the

camps, from which they had but recently departed. When the day dawned sufficiently to distinguish objects, he perceived the danger that must be dogging the heels of his main party. All about the camp were traces of Indians, who must have been prowling about it at the time his people had passed the night there; and who must still be hovering about them. Convinced, now, that the main party could not be at any great distance, he mounted a scout on the best horse, and set him forward to overtake them, to warn them of their danger, and to order them to halt, until he should rejoin them.

In the afternoon, to his great joy, he met the scout returning, with six comrades from the main party, leading fresh horses for his accommodation; and on the following day (September 25th), all hands were once more reunited, after a separation of nearly three weeks. Their meeting was hearty and joyous; for they had both experienced dangers and perplexities.

The main party, in pursuing their course up the Wind River Valley, had been dogged the whole way by a war party of Crows. In one place, they had been fired upon, but without injury; in another place, one of their horses had been cut loose, and carried off. At length, they were so closely beset, that they were

obliged to make a retrograde move, lest they should be surprised and overcome. This was the movement which had caused such perplexity to Captain Bonneville.

The whole party now remained encamped for two or three days, to give repose to both men and horses. Some of the trappers, however, pursued their vocations about the neighboring streams. While one of them was setting his traps, he heard the tramp of horses, and looking up, beheld a party of Crow braves moving along at no great distance, with a considerable cavalcade. The trapper hastened to conceal himself, but was discerned by the quick eye of the savages. With whoops and yells, they dragged him from his hiding-place, flourished over his head their tomahawks and scalping-knives, and for a time, the poor trapper gave himself up for lost. Fortunately, the Crows were in a jocose, rather than a sanguinary mood. They amused themselves heartily, for a while, at the expense of his terrors; and after having played off divers Crow pranks and pleasantries, suffered him to depart unharmed. It is true, they stripped him completely, one taking his horse, another his gun, a third his traps, a fourth his blanket, and so on, through all his accoutrements, and even his clothing, until he was stark naked: but then they gen-

erously made him a present of an old tattered buffalo robe, and dismissed him, with many complimentary speeches, and much laughter. When the trapper returned to the camp, in such sorry plight, he was greeted with peals of laughter from his comrades, and seemed more mortified by the style in which he had been dismissed, than rejoiced at escaping with his life. A circumstance which he related to Captain Bonneville, gave some insight into the cause of this extreme jocularity on the part of the Crows. They had evidently had a run of luck, and, like winning gamblers, were in high good humor. Among twenty-six fine horses, and some mules, which composed their cavalcade, the trapper recognized a number which had belonged to Fitzpatrick's brigade, when they parted company on the Bighorn. It was supposed, therefore, that these vagabonds had been on his trail, and robbed him of part of his cavalry.

On the day following this affair, three Crows came into Captain Bonneville's camp, with the most easy, innocent, if not impudent air imaginable; walking about with that imperturbable coolness and unconcern, in which the Indian rivals the fine gentleman. As they had not been of the set which stripped the trapper, though evidently of the same band, they were not

molested. Indeed, Captain Bonneville treated them with his usual kindness and hospitality; permitting them to remain all day in the camp and even to pass the night there. At the same time, however, he caused a strict watch to be maintained on all their movements; and at night, stationed an armed sentinel near them. The Crows remonstrated against the latter being armed. This only made the captain suspect them to be spies, who meditated treachery; he redoubled, therefore, his precautions. At the same time, he assured his guests, that while they were perfectly welcome to the shelter and comfort of his camp, yet, should any of their tribe venture to approach during the night, they would certainly be shot; which would be a very unfortunate circumstance, and much to be deplored. To the latter remark, they fully assented; and shortly afterward commenced a wild song, or chant, which they kept up for a long time, and in which, they very probably gave their friends, who might be prowling around the camp, notice that the white men were on the alert. The night passed away without disturbance. In the morning the three Crow guests were very pressing that Captain Bonneville and his party should accompany them to their camp, which they said was close by. Instead of

accepting their invitation, Captain Bonneville took his departure with all possible dispatch, eager to be out of the vicinity of such a piratical horde; nor did he relax the diligence of his march, until, on the second day, he reached the banks of the Sweet Water, beyond the limits of the Crow country, and a heavy fall of snow had obliterated all traces of his course.

He now continued on for some few days, at a slower pace, round the point of the mountain towards Green River, and arrived once more at the *caches*, on the 14th of October.

Here they found traces of the band of Indians who had hunted them in the defile towards the head-waters of the Wind River. Having lost all trace of them on their way over the mountains, they had turned and followed back their trail down Green River Valley to the *caches*. One of these they had discovered and broken open, but it fortunately contained nothing but fragments of old iron, which they had scattered about in all directions, and then departed. In examining their deserted camp, Captain Bonneville discovered that it numbered thirty-nine fires and had more reason than ever to congratulate himself on having escaped the clutches of such a formidable band of freebooters.

He now turned his course southward, under cover of the mountains, and on the 25th of

October reached Liberge's Ford, a tributary of the Colorado, where he came suddenly upon the trail of this same war party, which had crossed the stream so recently, that the banks were yet wet with the water that had been splashed upon them. To judge from their tracks, they could not be less than three hundred warriors, and apparently of the Crow nation.

Captain Bonneville was extremely uneasy lest this overpowering force should come upon him in some place where he would not have the means of fortifying himself promptly. He now moved towards Hane's Fork, another tributary of the Colorado, where he encamped, and remained during the 26th of October. Seeing a large cloud of smoke to the south, he supposed it to arise from some encampment of Shoshonies, and sent scouts to procure information and to purchase a lodge. It was, in fact, a band of Shoshonies, but with them were encamped Fitzpatrick and his party of trappers. That active leader had an eventful story to relate of his fortunes in the country of the Crows. After parting with Captain Bonneville on the banks of the Bighorn, he made for the west, to trap upon Powder and Tongue rivers. He had between twenty and thirty men with him, and about one hundred horses. So large

a cavalcade could not pass through the Crow country without attracting the attention of its freebooting hordes. A large band of Crows were soon on their traces, and came up with them on the 5th of September, just as they had reached Tongue River. The Crow chief came forward with great appearance of friendship, and proposed to Fitzpatrick that they should encamp together. The latter, however, not having any faith in the Crows, declined the invitation, and pitched his camp three miles off. He then rode over, with two or three men, to visit the Crow chief, by whom he was received with great apparent cordiality. In the meantime, however, a party of young braves, who considered themselves absolved by his distrust from all scruples of honor, made a circuit privately, and dashed into his encampment. Captain Stewart, who had remained there in the absence of Fitzpatrick, behaved with great spirit; but the Crows were too numerous and active. They had got possession of the camp, and soon made booty of everything—carrying off all the horses. On their way back they met Fitzpatrick returning to his camp; and finished their exploit by rifling and nearly stripping him.

A negotiation now took place between the plundered white men and the triumphant

Crows; what eloquence and management Fitzpatrick made use of, we do not know; but he succeeded in prevailing upon the Crow chieftain to return him his horses and many of his traps; together with his rifles and a few rounds of ammunition for each man. He then set out with all speed to abandon the Crow country, before he should meet with any fresh disasters.

After his departure, the consciences of some of the most orthodox Crows pricked them sorely for having suffered such a cavalcade to escape out of their hands. Anxious to wipe off so foul a stigma on the reputation of the Crow nation, they followed on his trail, nor quit hovering about him on his march until they had stolen a number of his best horses and mules. It was, doubtless, this same band which came upon the lonely trapper on the Popo Agie, and generously gave him an old buffalo robe in exchange for his rifle, his traps, and all his accoutrements. With these anecdotes, we shall, for the present, take our leave of the Crow country and its vagabond chivalry.

Chapter XXVIII.

A Region of Natural Curiosities—The Plain of White Clay—Hot Springs—The Beer Spring—Departure to Seek the Free Trappers—Plain of Portneuf—Lava—Chasms and Gullies—Banneck Indians—Their Hunt of the Buffalo—Hunters' Feast—Trencher Heroes—Bullying of an Absent Foe—The Damp Comrade—The Indian Spy—Meeting with Hodgkiss—His Adventures—Poordevil Indians—Triumph of the Bannecks—Blackfeet Policy in War.

CROSSING an elevated ridge, Captain Bonneville now came upon Bear River, which, from its source to its entrance into the Great Salt Lake, describes the figure of a horseshoe. One of the principal head-waters of this river, although supposed to abound with beaver, has never been visited by the trapper; rising among rugged mountains, and being barricaded by fallen pine-trees and tremendous precipices.

Proceeding down this river, the party en-

camped, on the 6th of November, at the outlet of a lake about thirty miles long, and from two to three miles in width, completely imbedded in low ranges of mountains, and connected with Bear River by an impassable swamp. It is called the Little Lake, to distinguish it from the great one of salt water.

On the 10th of November, Captain Bonneville visited a place in the neighborhood which is quite a region of natural curiosities. An area of about half a mile square presents a level surface of white clay or fuller's earth, perfectly spotless, resembling a great slab of Parian marble, or a sheet of dazzling snow. The effect is strikingly beautiful at all times; in summer, when it is surrounded with verdure, or in autumn, when it contrasts its bright immaculate surface with the withered herbage. Seen from a distant eminence, it then shines like a mirror, set in the brown landscape. Around this plain are clustered numerous springs of various sizes and temperatures. One of them, of scalding heat, boils furiously and incessantly, rising to the height of two or three feet. In another place, there is an aperture in the earth, from which rushes a column of steam that forms a perpetual cloud. The ground for some distance around sounds hollow, and startles the solitary trapper, as he

hears the tramp of his horse giving the sound of a muffled drum. He pictures to himself a mysterious gulf below, a place of hidden fires, and gazes round him with awe and uneasiness.

The most noted curiosity, however, of this singular region, is the *Beer Spring*, of which trappers give wonderful accounts. They are said to turn aside from their route through the country to drink of its waters, with as much eagerness as the Arab seeks some famous well of the desert. Captain Bonneville describes it as having the taste of beer. His men drank it with avidity, and in copious draughts. It did not appear to him to possess any medicinal properties, or to produce any peculiar effects. The Indians, however, refuse to taste it, and endeavor to persuade the white men from doing so.

We have heard this also called the Soda Spring, and described as containing iron and sulphur. It probably possesses some of the properties of the Ballston water.

The time had now arrived for Captain Bonneville to go in quest of the party of free trappers detached in the beginning of July, under the command of Mr. Hodgkiss, to trap upon the head-waters of Salmon River. His intention was to unite them with the party with which he was at present travelling, that all

might go into quarters together for the winter. Accordingly, on the 11th of November, he took a temporary leave of his band, appointing a rendezvous on Snake River, and, accompanied by three men, set out upon his journey. His route lay across the plain of the Portneuf, a tributary stream of Snake River, called after an unfortunate Canadian trapper, murdered by the Indians. The whole country through which he passed, bore evidence of volcanic convulsions and conflagration in the olden time. Great masses of lava lay scattered about in every direction; the crags and cliffs had apparently been under the action of fire; the rocks in some places seemed to have been in a state of fusion; the plain was rent and split with deep chasms and gullies, some of which were partly filled with lava.

They had not proceeded far, however, before they saw a party of horsemen galloping full tilt towards them. They instantly turned, and made full speed for the covert of a woody stream, to fortify themselves among the trees. The Indians came to a halt, and one of them came forward alone. He reached Captain Bonneville and his men just as they were dismounting and about to post themselves. A few words dispelled all uneasiness. It was a party of twenty-five Banneck Indians, friendly

to the whites, and they proposed, through their envoy, that both parties should encamp together, and hunt the buffalo, of which they had discovered several large herds hard by. Captain Bonneville cheerfully assented to their proposition, being curious to see their manner of hunting.

Both parties accordingly encamped together on a convenient spot, and prepared for the hunt. The Indians first posted a boy on a small hill near the camp, to keep a look out for enemies. The "runners" then, as they are called, mounted on fleet horses, and armed with bows and arrows, moved slowly and cautiously towards the buffalo, keeping as much as possible out of sight, in hollows and ravines. When within a proper distance, a signal was given, and they all opened at once like a pack of hounds, with a full chorus of yells, dashing into the middle of the herds, and launching their arrows to the right and left. The plain seemed absolutely to shake under the tramp of the buffalo, as they scoured off. The cows in headlong panic, the bulls furious with rage, uttering deep roars, and occasionally turning with a desperate rush upon their pursuers. Nothing could surpass the spirit, grace, and dexterity, with which the Indians managed their horses; wheeling and coursing among the affrighted herd, and launching their

arrows with unerring aim. In the midst of the apparent confusion, they selected their victims with perfect judgment, generally aiming at the fattest of the cows, the flesh of the bull being nearly worthless, at this season of the year. In a few minutes, each of the hunters had crippled three or four cows. A single shot was sufficient for the purpose, and the animal, once maimed, was left to be completely dispatched at the end of the chase. Frequently, a cow was killed on the spot by a single arrow. In one instance, Captain Bonneville saw an Indian shoot his arrow completely through the body of a cow, so that it struck in the ground beyond. The bulls, however, are not so easily killed as the cows, and always cost the hunter several arrows, sometimes making battle upon the horses, and chasing them furiously, though severely wounded, with the darts still sticking in their flesh.

The grand scamper of the hunt being over, the Indians proceeded to dispatch the animals that had been disabled; then cutting up the carcasses, they returned with loads of meat to the camp, where the choicest pieces were soon roasting before large fires, and a hunter's feast succeeded: at which Captain Bonneville and his men were qualified, by previous fasting, to perform their parts with great vigor.

Some men are said to wax valorous upon a full stomach, and such seemed to be the case with the Banneck braves, who, in proportion as they crammed themselves with buffalo meat, grew stout of heart, until, the supper at an end, they began to chant war songs, setting forth their mighty deeds, and the victories they had gained over the Blackfeet. Warming with the theme, and inflating themselves with their own eulogies, these magnanimous heroes of the trencher would start up, advance a short distance beyond the light of the fire, and apostrophize most vehemently their Blackfeet enemies, as though they had been within hearing. Ruffling, and swelling, and snorting, and slapping their breasts, and brandishing their arms, they would vociferate all their exploits; reminding the Blackfeet how they had drenched their towns in tears and blood; enumerate the blows they had inflicted, the warriors they had slain, the scalps they had brought off in triumph. Then, having said everything that could stir a man's spleen or pique his valor, they would dare their imaginary hearers, now that the Bannecks were few in number, to come and take their revenge—receiving no reply to this valorous bravado, they would conclude by all kinds of sneers and insults, deriding the Blackfeet for dastards and pol-

troons, that dared not accept their challenge. Such is the kind of swaggering and rodomontade in which the "red men" are prone to indulge in their vainglorious moments; for, with all their vaunted taciturnity, they are vehemently prone at times to become eloquent about their exploits, and to sound their own trumpet.

Having vented their valor in this fierce effervescence, the Banneck braves gradually calmed down, lowered their crests, smoothed their ruffled feathers, and betook themselves to sleep, without placing a single guard over their camp; so that, had the Blackfeet taken them at their word, but few of these braggart heroes might have survived for any further boasting.

On the following morning, Captain Bonneville purchased a supply of buffalo meat from his braggadocio friends; who, with all their vaporing, were in fact a very forlorn horde, destitute of fire-arms, and of almost everything that constitutes riches in savage life. The bargain concluded, the Bannecks set off for their village, which was situated, they said, at the mouth of the Portneuf, and Captain Bonneville and his companions shaped their course towards Snake River.

Arrived on the banks of that river, he found it rapid and boisterous, but not too deep to be

forded. In traversing it, however, one of the horses was swept suddenly from his footing, and his rider was flung from the saddle into the midst of the stream. Both horse and horseman were extricated without any damage, except that the latter was completely drenched, so that it was necessary to kindle a fire to dry him. While they were thus occupied, one of the party looking up, perceived an Indian scout cautiously reconnoitring them from the summit of a neighboring hill. The moment he found himself discovered, he disappeared behind the hill. From his furtive movements, Captain Bonneville suspected him to be a scout from the Blackfeet camp, and that he had gone to report what he had seen to his companions. It would not do to loiter in such a neighborhood, so the kindling of the fire was abandoned, the drenched horseman mounted in dripping condition, and the little band pushed forward directly into the plain, going at a smart pace, until they had gained a considerable distance from the place of supposed danger. Here encamping for the night, in the midst of abundance of sage, or wormwood, which afforded fodder for their horses, they kindled a huge fire for the benefit of their damp comrade, and then proceeded to prepare a sumptuous supper of buffalo humps and ribs, and other choice bits,

which they had brought with them. After a hearty repast, relished with an appetite unknown to city epicures, they stretched themselves upon their couches of skins, and under the starry canopy of heaven enjoyed the sound and sweet sleep of hardy and well-fed mountaineers.

They continued on their journey for several days, without any incident worthy of notice, and on the 19th of November, came upon traces of the party of which they were in search; such as burnt patches of prairie, and deserted camping grounds. All these were carefully examined, to discover by their freshness or antiquity the probable time that the trappers had left them; at length, after much wandering and investigating, they came upon a regular trail of the hunting party, which led into the mountains, and following it up briskly, came about two o'clock in the afternoon of the 20th, upon the encampment of Hodgkiss and his band of free trappers, in the bosom of a mountain valley.

It will be recollected that these free trappers, who were masters of themselves and their movements, had refused to accompany Captain Bonneville back to Green River in the preceding month of July, preferring to trap about the upper waters of the Salmon River, where they

expected to find plenty of beaver, and a less dangerous neighborhood. Their hunt had not been very successful. They had penetrated the great range of mountains among which some of the upper branches of Salmon River take their rise, but had become so entangled among immense and almost impassable barricades of fallen pines, and so impeded by tremendous precipices, that a greater part of their season had been wasted among those mountains. At one time they had made their way through them, and reached the Boisée River; but meeting with a band of Banneck Indians, from whom they apprehended hostilities, they had again taken shelter among the mountains, where they were found by Captain Bonneville. In the neighborhood of their encampment, the captain had the good fortune to meet with a family of those wanderers of the mountains, emphatically called *les dignes de pitie*, or Poor-devil Indians. These, however, appear to have forfeited the title, for they had with them a fine lot of skins of beaver, elk, deer, and mountain sheep. These Captain Bonneville purchased from them at a fair valuation, and sent them off astonished at their own wealth, and no doubt objects of envy to all their pitiful tribe.

Being now reinforced by Hodgkiss and his

band of free trappers, Captain Bonneville put himself at the head of the united parties, and set out to rejoin those he had recently left at the Beer Spring, that they might all go into winter quarters on Snake River. On his route, he encountered many heavy falls of snow, which melted almost immediately, so as not to impede his march, and on the 4th of December he found his other party, encamped in the very place where he had partaken in the buffalo hunt with the Bannecks.

The braggart horde was encamped about three miles off, and were just then in high glee and festivity, and more swaggering than ever, celebrating a prodigious victory. It appeared that a party of their braves being out on a hunting excursion, dicovered a band of Blackfeet moving, as they thought, to surprise their hunting camp. The Bannecks immediately posted themselves on each side of a dark ravine, through which the enemy must pass, and just as they were entangled in the midst of it, attacked them with great fury. The Blackfeet struck with sudden panic, threw off their buffalo robes and fled, leaving one of their warriors dead on the spot. The victors eagerly gathered up the spoils; but their greatest prize was the scalp of the Blackfoot brave. This they bore off in triumph to their village, where

it has ever since been an object of the greatest exultation and rejoicing. It had been elevated upon a pole in the center of the village, where the warriors had celebrated the scalp dance round it, with war feasts, war songs, and war-like harangues. It had then been given up to the women and boys; who had paraded it up and down the village with shouts and chants and antic dances; occasionally saluting it with all kinds of taunts, invectives, and revilings.

The Blackfeet, in this affair, do not appear to have acted up to the character which has rendered them objects of such terror. Indeed, their conduct in war, to the inexperienced observer, is full of inconsistencies; at one time they are headlong in courage, and heedless of danger; at another time cautious almost to cowardice. To understand these apparent incongruities, one must know their principles of warfare. A war party, however triumphant, if they lose a warrior in the fight, bring back a cause of mourning to their people, which casts a shade over the glory of their achievement. Hence, the Indian is often less fierce and reckless in general battle, than he is in a private brawl; and the chiefs are checked in their boldest undertakings by the fear of sacrificing their warriors.

This peculiarity is not confined to the

Blackfeet. Among the Osages, says Captain Bonneville, when a warrior falls in battle, his comrades, though they may have fought with consummate valor, and won a glorious victory, will leave their arms upon the field of battle, and returning home with dejected countenances, will halt without the encampment, and wait until the relatives of the slain come forth and invite them to mingle again with their people.

Chapter XXIX.

Within Camp at the Portneuf—Fine Springs—The Banneck Indians—Their Honesty—Captain Bonneville Prepares for an Expedition—Christmas—The American Falls—Wild Scenery—Fishing Falls—Snake Indians—Scenery on the Bruneau—View of Volcanic Country from a Mountain—Powder River—Shoshokoes, or Root Diggers—Their Character Habits, Habitations, Dogs—Vanity at its Last Shift.

IN establishing his winter camp near the Portneuf, Captain Bonneville had drawn off to some little distance from his Banneck friends, to avoid all annoyance from their intimacy or intrusions. In so doing, however, he had been obliged to take up his quarters on the extreme edge of the flat land, where he was encompassed with ice and snow, and had nothing better for his horses to subsist on than wormwood. The Bannecks, on the contrary, were encamped among fine springs of water, where there was grass in abundance. Some of these springs gush out of the earth in sufficient quantity to turn a mill, and furnish beau-

tiful streams, clear as crystal, and full of trout of a large size, which may be seen darting about the transparent water.

Winter now set in regularly. The snow had fallen frequently, and in large quantities, and covered the ground to the depth of a foot; and the continued coldness of the weather prevented any thaw.

By degrees, a distrust which at first subsisted between the Indians and the trappers, subsided, and gave way to mutual confidence and good-will. A few presents convinced the chiefs that the white men were their friends; nor were the white men wanting in proofs of the honesty and good faith of their savage neighbors. Occasionally, the deep snow and the want of fodder obliged them to turn their weakest horses out to roam in quest of sustenance. If they at any time strayed to the camp of the Bannecks, they were immediately brought back. It must be confessed, however, that if the stray horse happened, by any chance, to be in vigorous plight and good condition, though he was equally sure to be returned by the honest Bannecks, yet it was always after the lapse of several days, and in a very gaunt and jaded state; and always with the remark, that they had found him a long way off. The uncharitable were apt to surmise that he had, in the in-

terim, been well used up in a buffalo hunt; but those accustomed to Indian morality in the matter of horse-flesh, considered it a singular evidence of honesty, that he should be brought back at all.

Being convinced, therefore, from these and other circumstances, that his people were encamped in the neighborhood of a tribe as honest as they were valiant, and satisfied that they would pass their winter unmolested, Captain Bonneville prepared for a reconnoitring expedition of great extent and peril. This was to penetrate to the Hudson's Bay establishments on the banks of the Columbia, and to make himself acquainted with the country and the Indian tribes; it being one part of his scheme to establish a trading post somewhere on the lower part of the river, so as to participate in the trade lost to the United States by the capture of Astoria. This expedition would, of course, take him through the Snake River country, and across the Blue Mountains, the scenes of so much hardship and disaster to Hunt and Crooks, and their Astorian bands, who first explored it, and he would have to pass through it in the same frightful season, the depth of the winter.

The idea of risk and hardship, however, only served to stimulate the adventurous spirit

of the captain. He chose three companions for his journey, put up a small stock of necessaries in the most portable form, and selected five horses and mules for themselves and their baggage. He proposed to rejoin his band in the early part of March, at the winter encampment near the Portneuf. All these arrangements being completed, he mounted his horse on Christmas morning, and set off with his three comrades. They halted a little beyond the Banneck camp, and made their Christmas dinner, which, if not a very merry, was a very hearty one, after which they resumed their journey.

They were obliged to travel slowly, to spare their horses, for the snow had increased in depth to eighteen inches; and though somewhat packed and frozen, was not sufficiently so to yield firm footing. Their route lay to the west, down along the left side of Snake River, and they were several days in reaching the first, or American Falls. The banks of the river, for a considerable distance, both above and below the falls, have a volcanic character; masses of basaltic rock are piled one upon another; the water makes its way through their broken chasms, boiling through narrow channels, or pitching in beautiful cascades over ridges of basaltic columns.

Beyond these falls, they came to a picturesque but inconsiderable stream, called the Cassié. It runs through a level valley, about four miles wide, where the soil is good; but the prevalent coldness and dryness of the climate is unfavorable to vegetation. Near to this stream there is a small mountain of mica slate, including garnets. Granite, in small blocks, is likewise seen in this neighborhood, and white sandstone. From this river, the travellers had a prospect of the snowy heights of the Salmon River Mountains to the north; the nearest, at least fifty miles distant.

In pursuing his course westward, Captain Bonneville generally kept several miles from Snake River, crossing the heads of its tributary streams; though he often found the open country so encumbered by volcanic rocks as to render travelling extremely difficult. Whenever he approached Snake River, he found it running through a broad chasm, with steep, perpendicular sides of basaltic rock. After several days' travel across a level plain, he came to a part of the river which filled him with astonishment and admiration. As far as the eye could reach, the river was walled in by perpendicular cliffs two hundred and fifty feet high, beetling like dark and gloomy battlements, while blocks and fragments lay in

masses at their feet, in the midst of the boiling and whirling current. Just above, the whole stream pitched in one cascade above forty feet in height, with a thundering sound, casting up a volume of spray that hung in the air like a silver mist. These are called by some the Fishing Falls, as the salmon are taken here in immense quantities. They cannot get by these falls.

After encamping at this place all night, Captain Bonneville, at sunrise, descended with his party through a narrow ravine, or rather crevice, in the vast wall of basaltic rock which bordered the river; this being the only mode, for many miles, of getting to the margin of the stream.

The snow lay in a thin crust along the banks of the river, so that their travelling was much more easy than it had been hitherto. There were foot-tracks, also, made by the natives, which greatly facilitated their progress. Occasionally, they met the inhabitants of this wild region; a timid race, and but scantily provided with the necessaries of life. Their dress consisted of a mantle about four feet square, formed of strips of rabbit skins sewed together: this they hung over their shoulders, in the ordinary Indian mode of wearing a blanket. Their weapons were bows and arrows; the latter tipped with obsidian, which abounds

in the neighborhood. Their huts were shaped like haystacks, and constructed of branches of willow covered with long grass, so as to be warm and comfortable. Occasionally they were surrounded by small inclosures of wormwood, about three feet high, which gave them a cottage-like appearance. Three or four of these tenaments were occasionally grouped together in some wild and striking situation, and had a picturesque effect. Sometimes they were in sufficient number to form a small hamlet. From these people, Captain Bonneville's party frequently purchased salmon, dried in an admirable manner, as were likewise the roes. This seemed to be their prime article of food; but they were extremely anxious to get buffalo meat in exchange.

The high walls and rocks, within which the travellers had been so long inclosed, now occasionally presented openings, through which they were enabled to ascend to the plain, and to cut off considerable bends of the river.

Throughout the whole extent of this vast and singular chasm, the scenery of the river is said to be of the most wild and romantic character. The rocks present every variety of masses and grouping. Numerous small streams come rushing and boiling through narrow clefts and ravines: one of a considerable size issued

from the face of a precipice, within twenty-five feet of its summit ; and after running in nearly a horizontal line for about one hundred feet, fell, by numerous small cascades, to the rocky bank of the river.

In its career through this vast and singular defile, Snake River is upwards of three hundred yards wide, and as clear as spring water. Sometimes it steals along with a tranquil and noiseless course ; at other times, for miles and miles, it dashes on in a thousand rapids, wild and beautiful to the eye, and lulling the ear with the soft tumult of plashing waters.

Many of the tributary streams of Snake River rival it in the wilderness and picturesqueness of their scenery. That called the Bruneau is particularly cited. It runs through a tremendous chasm, rather than a valley, extending upwards of a hundred and fifty miles. You come upon it on a sudden, in traversing a level plain. It seems as if you could throw a stone across from cliff to cliff; yet, the valley is near two thousand feet deep : so that the river looks like an inconsiderable stream. Basaltic rocks rise perpendicularly, so that it is impossible to get from the plain to the water, or from the river margin to the plain. The current is bright and limpid. Hot springs are found on the borders of this river. One bursts out of

the cliff forty feet above the river, in a stream sufficient to turn a mill, and sends up a cloud of vapor.

We find a characteristic picture of this volcanic region of mountains and streams, furnished by the journal of Mr. Wyeth, which lies before us; who ascended a peak in the neighborhood we are describing. From this summit, the country, he says, appears an indescribable chaos; the tops of the hills exhibit the same strata as far as the eye can reach; and appear to have once formed the level of the country; and the valleys to be formed by the sinking of the earth, rather than the rising of the hills. Through the deep cracks and chasms thus formed, the rivers and brooks make their way, which renders it difficult to follow them. All these basaltic channels are called "cut rocks" by the trappers. Many of the mountain streams disappear in the plains; either absorbed by their thirsty soil, and by the porous surface of the lava, or swallowed up in gulfs and chasms.

On the 12th January (1834), Captain Bonneville reached Powder River, much the largest stream that he had seen since leaving the Portneuf. He struck it about three miles above its entrance into Snake River. Here he found himself above the lower narrows and defiles of the latter river, and in an open and

level country. The natives now made their appearance in considerable numbers, and evinced the most insatiable curiosity respecting the white men; sitting in groups for hours together, exposed to the bleakest winds, merely for the pleasure of gazing upon the strangers, and watching every movement. These are of that branch of the great Snake tribe called Shoshokoes, or Root Diggers, from their subsisting, in a great measure, on the roots of the earth; though they likewise take fish in great quantities, and hunt, in a small way. They are, in general, very poor; destitute of most of the comforts of life, and extremely indolent: but a mild, inoffensive race. They differ, in many respects, from the other branch of the Snake tribe, the Shoshonies, who possess horses, are more roving and adventurous, and hunt the buffalo.

On the following day, as Captain Bonneville approached the mouth of Powder River, he discovered at least a hundred families of these Diggers, as they are familiarly called, assembled in one place. The women and children kept at a distance, perched among the rocks and cliffs, their eager curiosity being somewhat dashed with fear. From their elevated posts, they scrutinized the strangers with the most intense earnestness; regarding them with al-

most as much awe as if they had been beings of a supernatural order.

The men, however, were by no means so shy and reserved; but importuned Captain Bonneville and his companions excessively by their curiosity. Nothing escaped their notice; and anything they could lay their hands on underwent the most minute examination. To get rid of such inquisitive neighbors, the travellers kept on for a considerable distance, before they encamped for the night.

The country hereabout was generally level and sandy; producing very little grass, but a considerable quantity of sage or wormwood. The plains were diversified by isolated hills, all cut off, as it were, about the same height, so as to have tabular summits. In this they resembled the isolated hills of the great prairies east of the Rocky Mountains; especially those found on the plains of the Arkansas.

The high precipices which had hitherto walled in the channel of Snake River had now disappeared, and the banks were of the ordinary height. It should be observed, that the great valleys or plains through which the Snake River wound its course, were generally of great breadth, extending on each side from thirty to forty miles; where the view was bounded by unbroken ridges of mountains.

The travellers found but little snow in the neighborhood of Powder River, though the weather continued intensely cold. They learnt a lesson, however, from their forlorn friends, the Root Diggers, which they subsequently found of great service in their wintry wanderings. They frequently observed them to be furnished with long ropes, twisted from the bark of the wormwood. This they used as a slow match, carrying it always lighted. Whenever they wished to warm themselves, they would gather together a little dry wormwood, apply the match, and in an instant produce a cheering blaze.

Captain Bonneville gives a cheerless account of a village of these Diggers, which he saw in crossing the plain below Powder River. "They live," says he, "without any further protection from the inclemency of the season than a sort of break-weather, about three feet high, composed of sage (or wormwood), and erected around them in the shape of a half-moon." Whenever he met with them, however, they had always a large suite of half-starved dogs; for these animals, in savage as well as in civilized life, seem to be the concomitants of beggary.

These dogs, it must be allowed, were of more use than the beggarly curs of cities. The

Indian children used them in hunting the small game of the neighborhood, such as rabbits and prairie dogs; in which mongrel kind of chase they acquitted themselves with some credit.

Sometimes the Diggers aspire to nobler game, and succeed in trapping the antelope, the fleetest animal of the prairies. The process by which this is effected is somewhat singular. When the snow has disappeared, says Captain Bonneville, and the ground become soft, the women go into the thickest fields of wormwood, and pulling it up in great quantities, construct with it a hedge, about three feet high, inclosing about a hundred acres. A single opening is left for the admission of the game. This done, the women conceal themselves behind the wormwood, and wait patiently for the coming of the antelopes; which sometimes enter this spacious trap in considerable numbers. As soon as they are in, the women give the signal, and the men hasten to play their part. But one of them enters the pen at a time; and, after chasing the terrified animals round the inclosure, is relieved by one of his companions. In this way the hunters take their turns, relieving each other, and keeping up a continued pursuit by relays, without fatigue to themselves. The poor antelopes, in the end, are so wearied down, that the whole

party of men enter and dispatch them with clubs—not one escaping that has entered the inclosure. The most curious circumstance in this chase is, that an animal so fleet and agile as the antelope, and straining for its life, should range round and round this fated inclosure, without attempting to overleap the low barrier which surrounds it. Such, however, is said to be the fact; and such their only mode of hunting the antelope.

Notwithstanding the absence of all comfort and convenience in their habitations, and the general squalidness of their appearance, the Shoshokoes do not appear to be destitute of ingenuity. They manufacture good ropes, and even a tolerably fine thread, from a sort of weed found in their neighborhood; and construct bowls and jugs out of a kind of basket-work formed from small strips of wood plaited: these by the aid of a little wax, they render perfectly water tight. Beside the roots on which they mainly depend for subsistence, they collect great quantities of seed of various kinds, beaten with one hand out of the tops of the plants into wooden bowls held for that purpose. The seed thus collected is winnowed and parched, and ground between two stones into a kind of meal or flour; which, when mixed with water, forms a very palatable paste or gruel.

Some of these people, more provident and industrious than the rest, lay up a stock of dried salmon, and other fish for winter: with these, they were ready to traffic with the travellers for any objects of utility in Indian life; giving a large quantity in exchange for an awl, a knife, or a fish-hook. Others were in the most abject state of want and starvation, and would even gather up the fish-bones which the travellers threw away after a repast, warm them over again at the fire, and pick them with the greatest avidity.

The further Captain Bonneville advanced into the country of these Root Diggers, the more evidence he perceived of their rude and forlorn condition. "They were destitute," says he, "of the necessary covering to protect them from the weather; and seemed to be in the most unsophisticated ignorance of any other propriety or advantage in the use of clothing. One old dame had absolutely nothing on her person but a thread round her neck from which was pendent a solitary bead."

What stage of human destitution, however, is too destitute for vanity! Though these naked and forlorn-looking beings had neither toilet to arrange, nor beauty to contemplate, their greatest passion was for a mirror. It was a "great medicine," in their eyes. The

sight of one was sufficient, at any time, to throw them into a paroxysm of eagerness and delight; and they were ready to give anything they had for the smallest fragment in which they might behold their squalid features. With this simple instance of vanity in its primitive but vigorous state, we shall close our remarks on the Root Diggers.

END OF VOLUME I.